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OTHER TIMES;

OR THE

Monks of Leadenhall.

BY THOMAS GASPEY.

AUTHOR OF "THE LOLLARDS," "CALTHORPE," "THE WITCH FINDER," &c.

All thynges in this boke that ye shall rede,
Doe as ye lyst, there shall no manne you bynde,
Them to beliue, as surely as your crede,
But notwithstandyng certes in my mynde,
I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THE writer who attempts a tale founded on the events, the opinions, or the manners of a remote period, has a task of some difficulty to perform in furnishing himself with those particulars, relating to the former state of society, which are necessary for his purpose. When successful industry has conquered this, he is in no small danger of offending by the very toil he has undergone. That which has cost much labour, men are reluctant to consider of no value; and authors too frequently inflict the result of their researches in a way which must compel acknowledgment, though not admiration, of their useless diligence.

The individual who is responsible for the following pages cannot determine whether or not he has thus offended; but when he looks at the mass of illustrations which he has spared, he is almost afraid that he has fallen into an opposite error. What he has offered relative to old English habits, he has endeavoured to make correct. Such details, as well as the local pictures, are drawn from the most approved authorities. The documents quoted are what they profess to be, and have been accurately copied from the originals; the scenery and decorations of the ancient mysteries are described, without exaggeration; and the festivities of the day are given with a like regard for truth.

The principal characters are all imaginary, but many of the incidents will be recognised as having actually occurred at

the date of the story; and those acquainted with the chronicles of the times, will know that some of the most startling occurrences are deviations from romance into history

Dreary vaults and under-ground passages, stand so far justified by precedent, that it would seem an affectation of mincing delicacy, to offer any excuse for putting them in requisition for "the Monks of Leadenhall." Those who know how vast a theatre for subterranean enterprise remains to this day, where the Monastery once stood, will perhaps admit that the author has availed himself of the facilities there offered with moderation. If the depravity represented to exist where it ought least to have been expected, should seem over-charged, for proof that the reverse is the fact, he again refers to the Chronicles, to the Harleian Manuscripts, and the other records extant relative to monastic establishments, of too many of which, if those be truths which the world has received as such, it might be said with justice, in the words of the old poet Walton,

> In this place both early and late,
> Dame Lust, dame Wantonness, and dame Vyce,
> They were so there inhabited I wotte,
> That few taken heede to Goddy's service.

OTHER TIMES;

OR,

THE MONKS OF LEADENHALL.

CHAPTER I.

They raised his body once a year: and the day on which this ceremony was performed, which was called the day of his translation, was a general holiday.

HUME.

THREE travellers approached the entrance of Canterbury, as journeying from Dover, in the afternoon of a summer's day, when they found their advance opposed by an immense concourse of people. The crowd was so great that they could only go forward with extreme difficulty; but as they insensibly made a little way, they soon found that to retreat would not be more easy than to continue their course.

Two of the persons thus circumstanced were men, the third a female. Her age, to judge from appearances, could not exceed sixteen. She was evidently fatigued, but in spite of this, and notwithstanding the hot sun to which she had been exposed had detracted somewhat from the delicacy of her countenance, it was still so rich in beauty that every eye rested on her, while, wondering at all around her, she was too much engrossed by the buildings which presented themselves to observation, and the novelty of the moving scene, to feel conscious that she had for a moment occupied the attention of any one besides her immediate companions.

Her costume, and that of one of the men who rode by her side, was Spanish. This person, who might pass for her brother from the resemblance to be remarked, was about twenty-five years of age. His look was stern and thoughtful. The attention bestowed on the female by his side

afforded him no gratification, and whenever they succeeded in advancing a single pace, his eyes, from surveying the throng which they were attempting to penetrate, were constantly turned to the lady, with an expression that at once indicated a desire to make those near him comprehend that she was under his care, and that he was resolute to guard his charge with vigilance, and to repel, with decisive energy, any attempted familiarity.

The third person of the party was English. His age could not be more than twenty-one. He rode on the left-hand of the lady, the person last described being on her right. Though not less attentive to his fair companion than his friend, there was nothing of that sternness about his features which marked those of her protector. On the contrary, an air of exultation could be traced, and a gay anxiety to mark the surprise, the pleasure, or the admiration afforded or excited by the singular spectacle which opened on the foreigners.

"What think you of England now!" he exclaimed, when, from the increasing density of the multitude, they were obliged to stand still.

"In sooth, Edmund," his male companion replied, "I know not what to think of England as yet, but I have been amazed all the way we came to find its roads so replenished with men and women; for certainly I never saw a greater assemblage in all my life than that which I now behold."

"What," inquired the lady, "is the occasion of the meeting of the multitudes we now see?"

"I," said Edmund, "have been so much occupied in conversation with you and Ferdinand, that I forgot to refer to the calendar before, and had somewhat neglected it on our voyage; but what I now behold explains all, and I can at once comprehend the cause of this congregation at Canterbury."

"I should conclude," said the female, "that it must be some religious festival that is to be celebrated, from the numerous monks and pilgrims that mingle with the crowd. What day is it?"

"It is *Translation* day."

The foreigners looked on the speaker with surprise. Though they understood the English language perfectly well, both were at loss to make out the meaning of the

answer which they had just received. Their friend hastened to explain.

"This, being the seventh of July, is the day of the translation of Thomas Beckett, better known to you, perhaps, as St. Thomas of Canterbury. On this day his remains are raised from the sepulchre, where they have slumbered more than three centuries. If so disposed, you may see his bones, and, on making a suitable offering, touch them. Doubtless you have heard of the wonder-working power of these far-famed relics."

"I have heard of many miracles here performed. Not only bodily infirmities have been healed, but even sadness of heart, so I have read, can be at once dispelled by the touch of these same relics."

"Then haste ye, Ferdinand," cried the lady, "haste, make your offering, and be well; if indeed the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury can give the troubled heart repose."

"I fear me, Mariana," Ferdinand replied with a deep sigh, "repose can only be bestowed on my heart by that which shall stop its vibrations for ever."

The tone in which he spoke produced a momentary pause. Edmund wished to dispel the gloom which had come over them; and replied, with vivacity,

"Never think so, man. Look at the devout pilgrims around you—look at the merriment which is in their faces, and listen to the blithe sounds which greet the ear in all directions, and if you were sceptical in other instances, you shall be constrained to admit, that the remains of the saint are at least potent to dispel care and remove sadness of spirit."

He was justified in the reference which he made to the crowd. Instead of that solemnity which might be expected on the part of those who from religious motives had performed a long journey to visit the grave of a saint, the majority of the thousands assembled seemed riotously to enjoy the amusements of a common holiday. However pious and sublime their contemplations when they entered upon their pilgrimage, their austerity and reserve had gradually diminished, till at length, kept in countenance by each other, and in many cases excited by the refreshment which they had thought good for their earthly tabernacles, boisterous laughter had supplanted reverential silence, and jollity was everywhere predominant.

Though Ferdinand had expressed a belief, that not even the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury could secure him peace of mind, he was reluctant to pass through a city in which an object so venerated was to be found, without making his offering at the shrine, to which so many of the devout repaired; and perhaps, mingled with religion, something of curiosity made him not indisposed to seek the grand object of attraction. But the situation in which he saw Mariana precluded him from doing so at that moment. He replied,

"I am not of the number of those to whom you would direct my attention. These, relieved for a season from the ordinary toils of life, cannot but be joyful. Although I have never intruded on you the history of those cares and sorrows which are the inmates of my bosom, you will perhaps be able to believe that ordinary griefs would not depress my spirits, as you have not unfrequently seen them depressed. I cannot hope, that even the remains of a saint have power to remove my sadness, yet I would willingly see them. But Mariana cannot endure the violent pressure which those who approach them must sustain, and I do not judge it fitting to separate from her."

Edmund remarked that ere long the difficulty would be removed. It was probable that the throng which then strove to enter the cathedral, in order to proceed on their bare knees to the grave, would diminish. At all events, on gaining an inn where they could put up their horses, Mariana might rest in safety under his protection, while Ferdinand repaired to the church.

This seemed plausible, and slowly as they advanced, they calculated on very soon reaching an inn. They were not wrong in this, but when they had done so, it was only to learn that they must go further. Every apartment was already so crowded that those who belonged to the house were as anxious to repel, as under ordinary circumstances they would have been to welcome, fresh guests.

However reluctant to take such a course, they made new efforts to break through the crowd, in the hope of finding a less frequented inn, where they might rest themselves and their horses, which were more fatigued by the impediments they had encountered since they entered Canterbury, than from the exertions which had brought them to that city from

Dover. The search was useless. Every house that promised accommodation to travellers was in the situation of that which they had first reached, and they saw the end of the town without finding any place in which they could gain permission to rest themselves, or obtain the slightest refreshment.

The influx of visitors had that year been remarkably great. That this would be the case was partially foreseen, and as it appeared certain that all who came could not be entertained in the city, a number of tents and temporary huts had been set up in the neighbouring fields, near the road side. They were furnished with benches and tables, in which those who carried provisions with them were allowed for a small gratuity to eat, and some refreshments were prepared for sale by the itinerant proprietors.

Exhausted as the persons to whom our attention has been principally directed were, they did not disdain even the humble shelter and sordid fare to be obtained in one of these. It was not in the first instance quite certain that they could be received in a tent, but Edmund had the good fortune to observe a party rise from a form, and to secure it before any other customers could occupy it.

The tent which received them was large enough to contain from twenty to thirty persons. A number of voices demanded the attention of the master, and his presence was required in five or six places at the same moment. Some young men who wore the appearance of mechanics, and were seated near the entrance, distinguished themselves by the loudness of their calls. To appease them, a female of interesting appearance, bearing an infant at her bosom, stepped forward with a flaggon of ale in her hand, which she set before them.

"Is the knave your husband or master (if he be either the one or the other,) deaf?" a man, differing from the others in appearance, inquired.

The person who thus questioned her was apparantly between forty and fifty years of age. His small piercing eyes were continually winking to one or other of the company, and these, with his flat nose and long chin, which moved up and down with a rapidity corresponding with the knowing glances he unceasingly bestowed, threw a vulgar but comic expression into his countenance, which well disposed those

who looked on him to laugh, and his words proved that it was not his wish to repress the risibility provoked by his features.

The young woman made no answer at first, but on the question being sarcastically repeated by the same speaker, "It might be well," said she, "that he were deaf, if he often met with the like of you."

"What dost mean by that? Dost think, for all that simple downcast look of thine, I am like to suppose he is not accustomed to a greater din than I, with all these lusty bawlers to aid me, can make? If he be your husband——"

"What then?" said the master of the tent, sternly interposing, and fixing his dark full eye on his guest, with an expression of wrath which told that little provocation would suffice to urge him to something more than looks or even words.

"What then?" replied the other, mimicking the angry tone of the interrogatory; "why then I'll wager a groat against a gallon of ale, which is marvellous odds, being more than three to one, that thou art not her master."

"It is of little import to thee, so thou hast thy flaggon, whether I be or not."

"Thou declinest the wager. Thou art wise. But it was from thyself that I learned that thou wast not."

"How may that be, seeing I have not changed word with thee till now?"

"Marry, I learned it from your head-gear. I knew that the reason of your wearing your cap close over both your ears was, that you found such precaution right needful, to protect the drums of them from the shrill tongue of your meek helpmate."

There was something singular in the appearance of the host. The cap which had been noticed was made of black worsted. In front it reached to his eyebrows, and on the sides it came down completely over his organs of hearing, the ends of the cap being tied under his chin. His beard was untrimmed, and looked as if it had been carelessly shortened with scissors. He was unwashed, his hair was as much neglected as his beard, and a scar on his cheek disfigured him not a little, and contributed to that sternness, not to name it ferocity, which his whole countenance exhibited, but which beamed from his eyes at the moment

when his customer jested on his hearing, with a wrathful lustre not to be mistaken. He made an effort to repress his ire, at least so far as the person who had spoken to him was concerned, but it quickly rekindled when he turned to the female, who had remained the trembling spectator of that fury, which the careless language of the stranger had called forth.

"And why are you here?" he impetuously demanded.

"I but came with——"

"And who bade you come?"

"You were loudly called for, and seeing you already engaged, I thought to ease you of some fatigue."

"I called thee not—wouldst come at another's bidding?"

"I," replied the wife, while the tears of anguish streamed down her youthful face, "I thought not to disquiet thee; instead thereof, I——"

"Be dumb—get hence."

The poor girl, for such she was in years, made no reply, but hastened to obey the harshly uttered mandate of her husband.

Edmund, Ferdinand, and Mariana regarded her with pitying looks. When she was out of sight, the person who had moved the husband's displeasure spoke again.

"I'll tell you a secret, Mr. Ale-huckster, which you may tell, if you like, to your dame."

"And what may that be?"

"Why, that if I, being as I am but nobody, were that same wife of yours so saucily snubbed to-day while you had a troop of fellows to stand by you, I would show you no quarter to-morrow when alone."

The master of the tent had expected something serious, and disgusted with the trifling of his guest, he contemptuously turned away with the exclamation of "Fool!"

"Fool!" cried the other, "I wish you would make good your speech. If you call me fool, give me the pay of one."

"A cudgelling is often the pay of a fool, and that I shall be much inclined to bestow upon you, for little solicitation."

"Take care, mind what you say. I, Master Nicholas Bray, being no common person, am not to be taunted with mpunity."

"Then you, Master Bray, had better bear in mind the

rules of civility, (good-breeding is not to be expected,) or bray somewhere else."

"For matter of that, Mr. Huckster, good-breeding might perchance be thrown away on so poor a judge of it as you are. Never think to scold me as you do your wife, unless you can fight."

"And how in that case?"

"Then strip you as I shall do. Throw off your doublet and that same elegant cap; *throw off your cap*, I say, and I am your man."

The proprietor of the tent had at first seemed very well disposed to put the mettle of his customer to the proof, but he now drew back scrutinizing the countenance of the latter without speaking.

"Ah! ha!" cried the stranger, "is it so. What, you are at length awake, are you? You know who I am and what I can do; but, be dumb; get hence," he added, mimicking the manner in which the wife had been odered to withdraw.

No reply was offered, and prompt obedience was yielded to the command of Mr. Nicholas Bray.

CHAPTER II.

He being a martyr for the papacy, was more extolled than all the apostles or primitive saints had ever been. So, that for three hundred years, he was accounted one of the greatest saints in heaven."

BISHOP BURNET.

FERDINAND and Edmund, after the wife retired, had engaged in conversation, and paid no attention to the irritating speeches which were exchanged, till fighting was proposed. It was with astonishment that they saw the churlish husband silenced by one, for whom, a moment before, he had evinced the most sovereign contempt. The unmerited harshness with which he had spoken to the female, prevented them from feeling more than surprise. But it was necessary that one of the newly arrived party should speak to him, which had hitherto been prevented by the altercation. Rising for this purpose, Edmund followed him. He had

retired into a small adjunct to the tent, partly formed of wood and partly with sail-cloth. Edmund presented himself before the entrance to it. The man was seated. He had covered his eyes with his hands, and was much agitated.

"This is through thy doings," he said, in the same indignant tone which had before distressed his wife. "But for thy foolery I had 'scaped this knave."

The female bore the reproach without offering a word in reply. But the affliction which it caused she could not conceal; and though she averted her face, she was unable to control the sobs which repeatedly shook her slender frame.

Her distress escaped not the notice of her lord. The gloomy displeasure which sat on his countenance had not abated. But when he saw her silent agony, and perceived the tears which had fallen from her eyes bathing the hand of her infant, a touch of nature seemed to wake him to pity and remorse.

"It was wholly through thee," he said, as if he had felt it necessary to offer some justification of his wrath. "But," he added, with much more kindness in his manner, "it was not thy intent to fret me."

The effects of this relenting speech, were more striking than those of his indignation had been. It was as if grief had gained, from the remission of severity, a licence to be audible, and the eyes of the wife, in the moment when she strove to dry them, overflowed faster than before.

"Nay, weep no more," cried the husband, and a smile of comfort, amidst sobs and tears, illumined the face of the wife. He rose from his seat and turned towards her, but started at perceiving Edmund, and advanced to meet him in confusion, which he did not conquer even when he perceived it was only a new guest.

"I—I did not expect—" he stammered. "I would say I did not anticipate,—or rather, I did not know that I was wanted. What may you seek, my master?"

"I desire to know if you have any refreshments remaining of your store, to set before myself and my two companions."

"You will find but scanty fare here, and that not such in quality as gentles, like you, would care to regale with."

"Little need be said on that subject. We come here

merely because we cannot gain entrance elsewhere; you therefore owe us no thanks for our custom, and no apology for the coarseness of the viands which we may find."

"Salted beef you may have. For the manchet loaves, they are all consumed; but we have brown bread, not bad of the sort."

"This will suffice, but can you bring it soon?"

"It shall be served anon."

"And for the horses, can you do aught for them?"

"They shall have water, and they can graze with tolerable safety in the field, provided you first take off their saddles,"

"Why shall that make them more secure?"

"By reason that the returning pilgrim, who desires an animal of that description, would much prefer stealing a horse saddled, to bearing off one not so furnished."

There was something too rational in this remark to admit of its correctness being doubted. Edmund failed not to take the hint, and to act upon it without loss of time. On re-entering the tent, he found their humble table already spread, and what rather surprised him, the wife in attendance on Ferdinand and Mariana. Another flaggon of ale having been demanded by Mr. Nicholas Bray, it was served by the female. This Ferdinand remarked as singular, after the anger which she had so recently incurred for acting the same part. Such apparent disobedience did not escape the notice of Bray, who seemed well disposed to indulge in a jest on the occasion, but the voices of his companions were too loud to afford him a chance of being heard at the moment, and before a pause had occured, the woman had retired, and the opportunity for bringing his witticism, or what he mistook for one, to a good market, was lost.

"Saw ye the saint to day," cried one of his companions to the person opposite to him.

"Marry did I," was the answer of a very sanctified looking pilgrim, whose grey beard gave him rather a venerable aspect.

"And did you profit thereby."

"Marvellously; for behold this whitlow, which till then was fearfully sore and angry, is by virtue of that touch almost well."

And in proof of this he exhibited his finger, on which a whitlow nearly healed was seen.

"You ought to pay the saint well then for his medical virtue," cried Bray; "but I wonder you did not make free to get another cure out of his bones."

"A cure for what?"

"Why, for that tumour on thy nose,"

This produced a laugh at the ruby ornament of the pilgrim's face, at which he seemed to be rather offended; for notwithstanding that he had found it convenient to fall into such company, he wished to appear devout, and was really anxious for the reputation of the saint.

"Methinks, Master Nicholas, your humour carries you to jest on matters which are little fitted to become subjects of ribald mirth."

"Thou sayest that with enough of gravity, but much I doubt thy countenance would not so excellently accord with thy speech, if thou didst not feel more concern in respect of the laugh at thy nose, than thou wouldst for a slight passed on the most wonder-working bone belonging to Saint Thomas his skeleton."

"You are a profligate wanting grace to believe in the virtues of the saint, and doubting, like others of the vulgar, that miracles have really been performed through the virtues of his wisely revered remains."

"What thou now sayest, for all that thou art a pilgrim, hath some truth in it. But if thou wouldst remove my doubts, hie thee back to the tomb with thy nose, and solicit the wisely revered remains of the saint, to quench the little Etna there blazing."

A new laugh at the pilgrim's expence followed this speech. He, however, was not moved by it to seek that proof of the efficacy of the martyr's bones which had been sneeringly called for.

"I hope," said Bray, "you kissed the saint's shoe."

"I did."

"There you were right. By the bye, I think the shoe was more wisely kept than all the rest of his relics."

"And why?"

"Because it was only by preserving St. Thomas his shoe, that the priests could with certainty manage to save *his sole*."

"Irreverent unbeliever!" exclaimed the pilgrim, raising his eyes with an expression of horror.

"Never shew the whites of your squinters in that way, for fear you should overstrain them, and that done, all your prayers to the good Saint Thomas would hardly get your sight restored, as was that of Master Ailwardus, the *whetstone stealer*, on his paying his respects to the name of Becket."

"I know not that; seeing nothing is more certain than that a poor bird, which had been taught to speak, being pursued by a hawk, on merely calling out 'O St. Thomas, save me!' saw straight its enemy fall dead, and therefore——"

"Spare the inference which you would draw from this undoubted truth. I believe it as sincerely as you can, and have only to hope, that if cock sparrows are to learn speech, they will not be licensed to utter such nonsense as you are dealing forth."

"Thou art as a dog which barketh he knoweth not at what."

"Thou art as a cat which setteth up her tail, and putteth out her tiny claws about nothing, and where such shew of small war can be of none avail. What is Saint Tommy to thee?"

"Whatever idlers may suppose or tell, sufficient proofs exist of the miraculous power of these relics, and not only of the power of his bones, but also that of his mere habiliments. Who shall deny that his shirt, made by no common mortal hands, but sewed by the Virgin herself, hath comforted many women in travail?"

"It may be so."

"To the truth of this myself can speak."

"Peradventure it may have given thee posterity, and removed thy wife's despair."

"It is but two years come next latter Lammas, that Winifred Wriggleford, being sorely grieved that she had as yet no infant, on my suggestion application was made for the shirt of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and marvellous to state, the prayer having been granted, in very brief space dame Winifred brought forth two man children."

"O, for matter of that, I doubt not the shirt of St. Thomas (if indeed a shirt of his can now be found) might be made to bring comfort and relief to many a thriving dame, who might yield twins after the manner of Winifred Wrig-

gleford, care being taken in one particular with respect to the said shirt."

"In what way?"

"Why by especially remembering to provide a moderately young and lusty gallant to wear it."

Another laugh followed, in which the pilgrim himself thought it prudent to join, to escape further ridicule.

The master of the tent had overheard the latter part of the conversation, and now came forward.

"It is all too likely," said he, addressing himself to Edmund, "that the conversation of those who are near may be little to your taste, and you have a maiden with you who has not been accustomed to such society. If she would rather withdraw, the small hut which joins this tent, and the attendance of the female whom you have seen, shall be at her command."

The unexpected courtesy of their host was not despised. There was no prospect of improvement in the manner or language of those near them, and the friends gladly availed themselves of his offer.

Mariana then retired. The owner of the tent did not again quit it, but took his station near the entrance of the retreat in which he had previously been seen with his wife. Ferdinand and Edmund felicitated themselves on the opportunity which had thus been afforded to the companion of their journey for more conveniently resting herself. Satisfied that from interest, if not from inclination, their host would feel anxious to guard against any intrusion, their thoughts now turned to the tomb of Beckett. Edmund had seen all the ceremonies in former years, but Ferdinand, having never been in England before, was desirous of witnessing them. They considered, that for so short a time as would be necessary to afford this gratification, they might safely leave Mariana; and they accordingly, having mentioned their purpose to the man of the booth, re-entered the town, and made their way towards Christchurch, which was then dedicated to and called after Saint Thomas.

The crowd was still great, but their youth and strength enabled them to get forward faster than many of the zealots in the midst of whom they found themselves. They passed up the steps leading into the chapel on their knees. Some made a shew of baring their limbs, but the respect which

Edmund and his friend felt for the memory of St. Thomas of Canterbury, did not induce them to imitate this act of piety, and both observed, that several of those who made such a display were provided with small mats, to interpose between their flesh and the stones over which they advanced towards the sepulchre.

They soon found themselves near that spot, so dear to superstition, to which the body of Thomas Beckett had been consigned. A splendid shrine, enclosed with an iron grating, had been raised, about five feet in height, built of marble. The erection was carried still higher with boarding, which was wholly concealed from the view by massy plates of gold, on which images of angels, the Virgin Mary, and the saints, had been most elaborately worked. The sloping and highly decorated top was removed on these occasions, and the golden chest in which the bones of Becket rested, and the wooden case in which that was deposited, had been lifted from the grave. So much of the saint had been carried off at different times times by his votaries, that but little now remained for exhibition. The skull, crowned with laurel, and surrounded by a thin transparent substance intended to resemble the *halo* with which painters were accustomed to adorn their representations of celestial personages, were placed in a most conspicuous situation, care being taken that the fracture and the piece fitted into the hole again, together with the point of the sword broken in the head, should not escape notice. These vouchers for the identity of the relics were carefully pointed out by those who took the lead in conducting the solemnities. Other bones were disposed around, but it was to the skull that attention was principally directed. On this those whose devotion might be languid were ready, from curiosity, to fix their most ardent gaze. All were anxious to report that they had seen the wound inflicted on a bishop more than three hundred and fifty years before; which, though fatal to his life, had procured for his memory lasting renown, and placed the honours rendered to his name among the most extraordinary incidents recorded in the history of mankind.

Ferdinand gazed with breathless interest on the extraordinary spectacle. Enormous candlesticks of massy silver sustained the tall lights which threw their glare on the bones of the murdered churchman, surrounded by the shining

oblations of credulous wealth, which, in gold, in jewels of rare worth, and orient pearls of extraordinary size, astonished the beholders with their splendour. The prior of the monastery pointed to these occasionally with a white wand, and proclaimed the names of their donors. The bishops and monks who encompassed the shrine added to the effect of the scene, by raising their voices, not in the pensive strains of mourning, or the tremulous tones of supplication, but with the bold song of boundless exultation in the earthly fame and everlasting glory of the departed. While listening to the solemn sounds, and contemplating the clouds of frankincense which arose from the glistening chalices on all sides, the contrast was most powerful between the dazzling magnificence of the preparations, and the grim and dismal aspect of the object of them. This forcibly struck the youthful friends; both felt that the awful majesty of death was not to be subdued, and that all the pomp with which folly might deck his victim, though for a moment it might invite the attention to other subjects, would eventually make the lifeless, fleshless remains, flash on the vision more ghastly, more terrific than if exhibited without disguise.

The increasing pressure behind admonished Edmund and Ferdinand to make way for others. They accordingly quitted the tomb, and were conducted by the force of the current, which it was impossible for them to resist, to the altar in the cloister, before which Beckett had been slain. Here they contemplated the exact spot on which his blood had been shed, as indicated by a small slip of marble inserted in the stone on which the supposed saint had perished. That portion of the stone which had actually been stained with the blood of the dying priest, had been carefully cut out and sent to the Pope, to swell the holy treasures of the Vatican. Numerous pilgrims struggled for the honour of kissing the ground on which the martyr had perished.

Ferdinand and Edmund left the cathedral as soon as they could extricate themselves from the crowd. Taking their way through the town, they had nearly approached the tent in which Mariana expected them, when they met the party which had been seated near them, with Mr. Nicholas Bray at their head. He accosted Edmund as one of whom he had had some previous knowledge. The latter, astonished

at this, demanded to know where they had been acquainted. Nicholas shook his head and replied,

"Time has been you would not have much tasked your memory to know who Nick Bray was, and that too in the reign of our present merciful and gentle monarch, good king Henry the Eighth."

"It may be so."

"Nay, my sweet master Edmund Sherborne, it is so. When I had the honour to be fool to my Lord Cardinal, your father being alive, and you a very youngster, you then knew every bell on my bonnet."

"I must confess that you have reason in what you say."

"You have hit on my misfortune. I have reason, and indeed it was to be found so calamitously abundant in me, that I was thought no good fool, and so got flouted, as one not well skilled in the art of making himself ridiculous."

"I now remember you well, but before I knew you not. Nor will you wonder at this, when I remind you that valour was not formerly in the list of your good qualities, and therefore you ran small risk of being recognized when you so boldly challenged yon grim-looking, threatening ale-master."

"Truth to tell, I exposed myself to little danger in proposing to him that we should fight on the terms which I propounded, and therefore in this case I have gained, as greater men have done before me, a reputation for courage without exposing my person to peril."

"Is he whom you challenged then so arrant a coward, that you could be sure he would not take you at your word?"

"I know not that, but this I know, that he is one who cares not to be met by those who know him. Not a twelvemonth past, I saw him in the pillory, and saw his ears cut as beautifully close to his skull as ever were those of a puppy dog at Finsbury. Therefore, he now wears that same cap, which I required him to doff before we fought, well knowing, as the old saying runs, he "dared not do it *for his ears*."

CHAPTER III.

Sleep steals away
The wild desires of men and toils of day;
And brings, descending through the silent air,
A sweet forgetfulness of human care.

POPE.

THE information thus communicated made Edmund anxious to return with all possible expedition. Though during their brief absence little danger could be apprehended, he felt uneasy at the idea of having left Mariana for a moment in the care of one whose villany had subjected him to a punishment so disgraceful as that which the ale-vender had sustained. Such a character it was easy to believe desperate enough for anything; though it was difficult to imagine any enterprize to which he could be tempted that ought to give them any immediate concern.

On their return they saw Mariana, who reported nothing to the prejudice of those with whom she had been left. The man had not approached the small apartment in which she rested, and the female had waited on her with the most respectful attention.

They determined to go forward. Edmund presented the master of the tent with a recompense which he supposed would be considered liberal. The man received it with an air of discontent. Edmund added to it what he thought must produce some expression of gratitude. The receiver sullenly bowed, but was silent. He afterwards did that which might be considered to indicate that he was not dissatisfied with his guests; he advised them to remain there for the night. Numbers, he observed, would be on the road during the hours of darkness, and it was to be expected that a great proportion of them would be in a state of intoxication. Thence he drew this inference, that scenes of riot were likely to occur, which those to whom he addressed himself would willingly avoid. He suggested, that it might be better for them to remain till the dawn, when they would be able to advance with more celerity than they could otherwise calculate upon, and escape much

inconvenience, and possibly some danger, to which they must be exposed if they journeyed by night.

In this reasoning, however specious, Ferdinand saw but the sordid argument of one who hoped to profit by their stay, opposed to their progress. He considered that their horses would soon leave those behind whose society they wished to shun, and therefore judged it advisable to make no further delay; but one of the animals was not to be found, and though diligent search was made in the neighbouring fields, it was no where seen. While thus detained, they saw the sun set, and the gloom of evening came on. They were in consequence induced to take the counsel of their host into serious consideration; and not knowing where to find a more commodious resting place, they decided to remain where they were.

The night proved one of remarkable beauty, the moon shone with a mild splendour on the lofty towers of the cathedral, which were seen above the houses of the city from the meadow where the tent was pitched, and every moving object on the road was almost as distinctly visible as by day. Their host having at length dismissed his other guests, proposed to mount one of the remaining horses, in order to seek the animal which had strayed. They consented to his doing so, when a suspicion glanced across the mind of Edmund, growing out of the information which he had received from Nicholas Bray, that it might he the intention of the man to abscond. He therefore resolved to accompany him.

They immediately departed, and Ferdinand and Mariana, allured by the fineness of the weather, walked forth in the field, gazing on the several objects which became conspicuous in the moonlight, and listening to the various sounds of mirth, contention, and devotion, which ascended from different parties of pilgrims who had already commenced their journey towards the metropolis. They ventured not to lose sight of the tent, but withdrawing themselves as far from the road as they could to keep it in their view, the noises which have been mentioned gave them no disturbance, and all immediately around the spot on which they found themselves was silent. Both, occupied with their own reflections, forgot to speak, and no word was uttered for some minutes. Ferdinand had halted, to imprint on his

memory the scenery which claimed his attention on this the first evening of his being in England. Mariana, leaning on his arm, glanced at the same objects, and then at the countenance of her relation, as if to read the impression which they made on him.

He perceived that her eyes rested on him, and starting from the reverie in which he had indulged, accosted her.

"At length, my beloved niece, for though our ages are so nearly equal, heaven has placed you in that relation to me, we are in the famous and opulent land which you know it has long been my object to visit; and in which you will find a peaceful home. I rejoice that my cares are nearly ended, so far as you are concerned! and I trust your bosom swells with holy transport, anticipating the speedy arrival of that moment which shall unite you for ever to some pious sisterhood, and place you where your hours shall never be disturbed with the vain contentions of a sinful world."

Mariana spoke not.

"You make no reply. Must I thence conclude that you are unreconciled to the step which I hold indispensable to your safety."

"Forgive me, Ferdinand, if I err. I wish to be in all things resigned to your will; but I must not dissemble. It would glad me if that which you purpose might be spared me."

"And why? In this country which has been famed for liberty—"

"For liberty, Ferdinand! Is it therefore that I am brought to England to be immured in a convent?"

"Even so: for liberty and equal laws, the cause and consequence of the prosperity of this famed land, leave it less exposed to internal commotions like those which afflict other countries, and ensure you, in a religious abode, that uninterrupted repose which might elsewhere be sought in vain."

"But reflect on the shudderings which will, which must, invade my feeble frame, when I see myself consigned, yet alive, to a dreary sepulchre in a foreign land!"

"The foe of your own peace, you conjure up ghastly phantoms, which, if I were weak enough to regard them, might leave you exposed to all the dire realities which form,

but too frequently, the melancholy history of woman's bud and bloom."

"And are not these braved by others?"

"Yes, and others fall their victims. I would save you from being added to the number. I would secure your peace, ere your heart has felt the envenomed dart of that peace-destroying demon, called in this language by the name of Love."

Mariana trembled, and with a faltering voice enquired if love were so much to be dreaded.

"Even as perdition," he replied, "for to that he often conducts his votary. What is the fate of many a beauty, whom the unthinking many deem fortunate? Worn for a brief season in the bosom of admiring man, then loathed, reviled, and slighted. Heard you not the hind who owns yon tent but a few hours ago, how harshly he could rebuke a woman, he who quailed and fled before the wrath of a saucy brawler? I saw the tear of bitter anguish fall from those eyes, which shone as bright as yours, to mar a face which, in despite of the mean habiliments of its owner, I thought most rich in heavenly beauty."

"I marked what you have noted; but I also marked that before the tear had finished its short course, one word of kindness, nay, one relenting look, could speak peace to the troubled heart."

"But is it well to be thus dependent on the wayward humours of a capricious mortal? A higher, happier destiny is yours. To God devoted from your youth, He, when the roses vanish from your cheeks, the lustre from your eyes, and when the music of your voice shall be changed into discord, will not forsake nor contemn his worshipper. Trust me, Mariana, the comfort, the pure joy this thought will inspire, shall far exceed the transient rapture which, under happiest circumstances, could be known in those scenes from which I remove you."

Mariana presumed not to reason in opposition to one whom in infancy she had loved as a brother, and whom in riper years she had learned to reverence as a parent; but the mournful air of resignation with which she listened to his voice, attested, that, if prepared to yield obedience to his decision, it was not from conviction that he was pointing out the course most conducive to her happiness. In truth,

the very kindness for which she was grateful, in sparing her a knowledge of the evils of life, had tended to any thing rather than to fortify her mind against those regrets, which at sixteen a blooming female may be expected to feel, when about to be snatched from all that she has learned to covet and admire.

Ferdinand perceived that his words had silenced but not convinced his niece; and he was about to make a new appeal to her understanding, when the trampling of horses gave notice of the return of Edmund with the owner of the tent, after having recovered the horse which had been missing. The lateness of the hour reconciled them to prolonging their stay, till daybreak. Mariana was committed to the care of the female with whom she had previously rested; Ferdinand and Edmund stretched themselves on two benches near that appendage of the tent to which their charge retired; and the proprietor withdrew to the corner most remote from them, where, sitting by a table, he reclined his head on his arm, and seemed endeavouring to compose himself to sleep.

When suspicion is once introduced into a mind, which has not been accustomed to harbour it, the most trivial circumstances suffice to keep it alive. From the moment that Edmund heard of the ignominious punishment to which the vender of ale had been subjected, he thought it necessary to watch all his movements, and in each turn, in every look, he discovered something equivocal. He had thought it possible that it was intended to rob them of their horses, when the man offered to seek the animal which had been lost; and Edmund was not convinced that no such plan had been formed, when the creature was found at a distance of less than a mile from the spot where the search commenced. Repeatedly he had perceived that the eyes of his late companion were stedfastly fixed on him, he thought with an expression of malevolence, and the confusion in which his face was averted, if Edmund suddenly turned to him, strengthened the idea thus conceived. He now doubted of its being really his intention to sleep, and determined for his own part, without disturbing his companion by communicating his thoughts, to remain awake. Ferdinand was not wont to pass much of his time in slumber, but the very few hours which they had devoted to repose made him then desirous of sleep. Previous fatigue seconded his wishes,

and he enjoyed a brief respite from care. Edmund imitated the breathing of one who enjoys sound repose, while his eyes, directed to the extremity of the tent, watched the object of his suspicion with unremitting vigilance.

He seemed to sleep, but Edmund was soon convinced that he was awake. The man gently moved, then raised his head from the table, and looked anxiously towards his guests, as if to ascertain whether his motions were observed. Edmund closed his eyes. In a few moments he heard the splashing of water. He could perceive that the party he thought it right to watch was indulging in a luxury, which from his begrimed appearance he had concluded he seldom coveted, that of washing. In performing this operation, he was most careful not to make a noise, and he repeatedly looked towards those whom he supposed to be sleeping, to satisfy himself that they had not been disturbed. This conduct appeared very singular; but Edmund could scarcely believe his eyes while he saw the being whose disregard of his person had struck him at first as remarkable, was actually painting his face. Having performed this operation, the taper, which till then had been kept burning, was extinguished. As the bell of the cathedral was sounding the midnight hour, the man made his exit from the tent. In doing this, he observed a cautious silence, Edmund listened in vain for the sound of his footsteps. For some minutes all was profoundly still, when a slight movement near him attracted his attention. He arose, and looking through a rent, perceived at a short distance the individual whose conduct was so suspicious. The moon was obscured, but there was sufficient light to enable Edmund to see distinctly that the suspected carried what seemed to be a deadly weapon; Edmund believed it to be a musket. Having occupied himself with it for a few seconds, the man lifted it to his eye, as if to take aim, though no object at which it could be levelled appeared in sight. Determined not to remain in uncertainty, Edmund left the tent. He came behind its owner, who started with unfeigned amazement, at finding one so near him. His confusion assured Edmund that he had not wronged him, and rushing forward, that he might not have time to recover himself, he rudely seized the arm which held the supposed instrument of death.

"Hold, villain!" he exclaimed, "what base design are you about to carry into execution?"

No resistance was attempted; no reply was offered; guilt—detected guilt—it struck Edmund, deprived the baffled wretch of speech. He suffered himself to be disarmed, without making the slightest effort to prevent it, or to escape; and Edmund, now looking at what he had believed to be a musket, found that he held in his hand a hollow stick, in which several glasses were inserted, to form an instrument somewhat resembling that which, although almost unknown in the early part of the sixteenth century, has since been in no small request with the scientific of all nations—the telescope.

CHAPTER IV.

Ne man ne may my sorrow glade
That mak'th my hew to fal and fade,
And hath myn understanding lorne,
That me is wo, that I was borne.

CHAUCER.

EDMUND was much surprised at this discovery. He examined the tube carefully, to ascertain that it was really what it appeared to be.

"It is passing strange," he at length said, addressing the man whom he had so rudely interrupted, "that at the dead hour of night you should thus occupy yourself; instead of seeking the repose which wearied nature claims."

"Perhaps it is strange; yet methinks, being as harmless as strange, I might have hoped to 'scape interruption. Surely it is no offence to look from earth to heaven. Mean and lonely as my estate is, I thought I might claim a right, not denied to less wretched reptiles, to view yon celestial bodies in their mysterious course; although it were too much to flatter myself, that in all that glittering host, one star would beam with kindly influence on me."

"I regret that I interrupted you. But when I perceived you coming near those whom you supposed to be sleeping,

as it struck me, in guilty silence, having some mortal weapon in your hand, I could not choose but arrest you. Little did I dream that one of your calling would have taste or capacity for studies so sublime as those to which it should seem you are devoted. For astronomy, it is a science I do love."

"I know it, Edmund," interrupted the other, "that is, I —I—" he faltered in confusion. "I doubt not you have learned to prize that which is in itself so noble."

"You named me!" cried Edmund, whose surprise, before great, was now wrought up to the highest pitch, by this new recognition. "Who are you? Where have we met before, that I should have been known to you, and that familiarly, as your speech would lead me to conclude?"

The stranger was silent for some seconds. He at length said—

"I wear my disguise but illy. I have betrayed myself, and cannot now escape. You would not always have started to hear yourself accosted by Clifford."

"Amazement! My old schoolmate, Clifford!"

"It is even so. Now, knowing who I am, nothing remains, but that I retire, for I doubt not the tale of my shame has reached you, and you are prepared to recede from the companion of your early days with disgust and abhorrence."

There was a melancholy plaintiveness in his voice, which, in spite of Clifford's endeavours to appear firm and resigned, to what he deemed inevitable, spoke acute anguish, and went to the heart of Edmund. He replied in a softer tone,

"I cannot deny that I have heard of your punishment. The crime for which it was inflicted I have not heard, but to confess all the truth I must infer——"

"From the measureless ignominy heaped upon me, that guilt, the most monstrous guilt, has been proved. Such is the reasoning of mankind. Misery is considered evidence of crime, of which this very treatment commonly makes it the parent. But hence these reflections. I wish not to intrude them on you, nor yet the story of my woe."

He turned from Edmund, and had begun to walk away. The latter followed him.

"From me, Clifford, you need not fly. Trust me, I grieve to see you thus depressed. However others may think it

right to act, I would not lend a deaf ear to aught that you would say; and should it be in my power to serve an old playfellow, you need not doubt my inclination, if——"

"If he can prove himself not unworthy of it. But that is impossible. You are sincere, but who will listen to the unsupported statement of a degraded culprit in opposition to the oaths of men who should be holy, and who are reputed to be so. Their perjuries are believed, but I, who am accounted guilty of perjury, cannot hope to obtain credit. But why should I complain. To my own vices I should attribute all."

"My astonishment is great, nor is my affliction less, at this rencounter."

"I do not wonder at it. Low as I am I expect that all who recognise me will be grieved to acknowledge that they know me. It was not my wish to become candidate for your pity, and I now ask not your endurance. Farewell."

"Stay.—Old schoolfellows must not part thus. My curiosity is marvellously wrought upon. Of your story I know nothing. A knave, who may have deceived me, did say that he had seen you in the pillory. But I asked for no particulars, not suspecting that the abject ale-vender you seemed——"

"And that I am."

"Not suspecting," Edmund continued, "that you had ever been friend to me. Tell me the circumstances which have thus reduced you?"

"To do so will be but to abuse your patience; but not to vex your ear by tedious details, these, in brief, are the facts. The giddy follies of my youth gave some scandal to my friends. The abbot of Mount Sinai, the superior of the priests of the Trinity at Leadenhall, was most severe on me for these, and laboured, I thought malignantly, to aggravate my wanderings, and to inflame against me all who had once interested themselves in my welfare."

"He is famed for exemplary piety. Doubtless it was his object to reclaim."

"To reclaim! *He* reclaim?"

"But now you admitted that your vices were the causes of your misery."

"True,—true; and I am a wretch to complain of the hostility of any one, having been so long my own enemy."

"The abbot then reproved your wandering?"

"He did. You may judge with what effect from that which I shall now relate. After a career of degrading folly, on one fatal night I revelled in lower dissipation than any which I had previously known. I suffered myself to be enticed to the *stews* in Southwark, and there, in the common stews, it was my hap to meet the abbot."

"He had dogged you thither."

"Not so, but the same vice had brought us to the self-same spot."

"Impossible!"

"So judge me, God, as I speak the truth," exclaimed Clifford, while raising his eyes with awful solemnity, he seemed to appeal to the Almighty. "A courtezan hung on the monk's arm. He was disguised, but I knew him. I could not be deceived; and, fool-like, I exulted in the check which I supposed I should thenceforth have on his malice."

"What ensued?"

"You will easily believe that I made no secret of what I had seen. It was the jest of all my companions, and soon of all the city. It reached the abbot's ears, and resenting it with well dissembled horror for the scandal thus thrown on religion, he demanded—O villain!—an opportunity to clear himself!"

"Nay, you can have no right to complain of that."

"So say all good men, and so he knew they would say. I had no right to complain; but mark the means he took. But how can I tell it! My bursting heart, my burning brain, deny me the power of connecting and embodying my ideas! He was subjected to a solemn enquiry. Never shall I forget the saintlike meekness with which he carried himself on that occasion."

"Yet from the tone in which you speak, that very meekness seems to have offended you."

"I speak of his outward carriage, assumed but to cover his falsehood and malevolence. Even now the mild language of the wily hypocrite is in my ears. He came not there forsooth to vindicate his own unworthy character. For himself, but too happy to be aspersed and persecuted as the follower of him who died on Calvary, no revengeful feeling would have induced him to clear himself. But it became his duty, for the scandal thrown on that religion of

which he was a humble minister. That repelled, he implored those whom he addressed, not to pursue with their just wrath the vindictive spirit which had called him forth. It was enough that calumny was silenced, and he added, his hands on his bosom, his eyes uplifted to the Deity he outraged, a prayer for me—for me, whom he knew he had laboured by all the arts of frightful perjury to damn."

"But his recommendation of clemency was not attended to."

"It was. He knew it would be. Well read in the human heart, he had calculated that it would not fail to inflame the holy zeal of those, who having acquitted him, became my judges. I had been compelled to depose to what I saw on oath. For this, I was doomed to the pillory, there to lose my ears."

"Unhappily, I need not ask if the sentence were carried into execution."

"With little delay this was done. It seems a frightful dream, too terrible to recall; yet, alas! I feel it is one from which I shall never wake to peace. In the broad glare of noon I was taken to Smithfield, to that spot which martyrs' blood had consecrated to fame and heaven; and there exhibited as an object of scorn and execration to a gaping crowd. This punishment was mine, and yet I live!"

"Speak lower," said Edmund, "or your voice will wake the slumberers in the tent."

"Could it answer to my feelings, like the blast of the latest trumpet, it would wake the dead. I felt the exposure, and thought of nothing else; but when the barbarous knife came to perpetuate on my wretched person the degradation which I sustained, though I mocked the wounds which it inflicted, the blood which should have flowed thence seemed to fly to my eyes, and mingle with the tears of shame and rage that streamed from them, while their wildly rolling orbs looked upwards at the blazing sun, as astonished that he could deign to shine on a world the scene of such transcendant crime."

He paused with emotion. Edmund, affected at his recital, was also silent. Scarcely could he believe what he saw and heard. That Clifford, once the gay companion of his boyhood, and the heir to immense wealth, should stand before him, the poor degraded ale-vender, in whose tent he had

rested, appeared incredible, though to doubt was impossible.

"I am grieved," said Edmund, "whatever your imprudence may have been, to see you thus. You have told me much, but I cannot account for your being as you are. Though unjustly punished, I should still have expected that you would not be reduced to that abject state of poverty in which I see you. Your friends might have averted this."

"But to which among them could a wretch reeking from the pillory apply? I thought not of the means of living, but only of concealment."

"Why then did you not pursue your fortune as a soldier in a distant country?"

"Could I do it alone? Who that draws a sword would call him comrade who bore the indelible stamp of infamy on his person? I had no resource but to hide among the lowest of the low, or to become a robber. Yes, there was one on which I meditated—self destruction. To this my mind was at one time wrought up, but in the moment when I sought death, my footsteps were arrested by one for whom it became my duty to live. I speak of the poor victim whom you saw yesterday. I loathe myself for reducing her to her present state. I could only hope to procure the means of existence where I was unknown, and in consequence, I assumed this garb. This scar I painted on my face, which I thought would contribute to prevent my being recognised. Since my disguise concealed me from you, I shall have more confidence in it for the time to come."

"And what scheme have you for the future?"

"It is my purpose to grovel on a little longer as I am. Should I be so fortunate as to gain more than will suffice to subsist on, I will pass to the newly-discovered continent, and endeavour to establish myself among some of the native tribes. If they do not put me to death, I may be able to make myself useful, from the little knowledge which I have of the arts, which are deemed important among civilised nations. There my disgrace will not be understood; the peculiarity which they must remark, may pass for the custom of an unknown country, and my life will close in the obscurity I covet; while my child, placed among savages, may escape the misery which I have known from being resident in a land of Christians."

"If such your determination, allow me to contribute

towards enabling you to carry it into effect. My purse is not so well replenished as I could wish for your sake, but such as it is, you are welcome to it."

"You have already done much. When you requited me so liberally for the wretched accommodation you have found here, I feared to express the emotion it called forth. My embarrassment seemed to you dissatisfaction, and you added to your former bounty. I would willingly return what was thus extorted, but feel I should but pain you by the offer. Let that which you have given me suffice, and inflict no new donation."

His manner was decisive, and Edmund abstained from pressing him further. Clifford strove to conceal the emotion which he could not subdue; and Edmund unconsciously walked in an opposite direction, musing on what he had just heard, and endeavouring to devise some expedient by means of which he might better the condition without wounding the feelings of one for whom, guilty or innocent, he could not but feel interested.

Edmund thought not of sleep. He was anxious to question Clifford on a variety of subjects, but he wanted resolution to do it, and feared that his interrogatories might add to affliction which was even then almost insupportable. He saw that a new day had dawned; and the gradually increasing light reminded him that the hour fixed upon for their departure had arrived. He returned to the tent, before which Clifford was standing with folded arms, so absorbed in thought that he did not immediately perceive the approach of Edmund.

"Tell me this," said Edmund; "when the storm burst on you what part in respect to it did your uncle, Lord Erpingham, take? Did he not befriend you?"

Clifford was evidently embarrassed. Edmund remarked it, and could not help drawing an unfavourable conclusion therefrom. After a pause of some minutes, the question being repeated, he replied with extreme agitation,

"Ask me not. Of Lord Erpingham I would say nothing." Then, apparently impatient to change the conversation, or to terminate it, he remarked, "It is already dawn; I will now prepare your horses."

"I would not see you act that servile part for me," cried Edmund.

"Nay," the other answered, "in serving you I shall serve myself. It will tend towards making me expert in my vocation, which to say truth is not the case at present. He who has acquired accomplishments of which nobles are taught to be proud, finds, when he descends to associate with clowns, that he has not a little to learn, before they can regard him as an equal."

"At all events, as in other days, I will be your comrade," said Edmund, and he hastened to assist Clifford with the horses.

While they were thus engaged, Ferdinand awoke by the neighing of one of the animals, and perceiving it was dawn, led Mariana from the tent. All was soon ready. The uncle and niece mounted their horses, and only waited for Edmund. He desired them to go forward at a slow pace till he should overtake them; they complied, and Edmund, turning to Clifford, said,

"We must part; but I could wish that we should speedily meet again."

"Could any inconceivable good fortune lift me again to be your equal, or were misery, which heaven forefend! to make you mine, I should be right willing to renew our acquaintance, and would go through the world with you. But while that disparity exists which now separates us, it is not fit that we should meet more. Your friends expect you. Farewell! May you be happy!"

"But tell me how I can communicate with you, should aught transpire which I may deem it important that you should know."

"It is not in my power to comply with the kind request. You are already aware of my intention to seek a home in the new world. I go not like the multitude in quest of gold, but to escape from scorn and from the haunts of civilised men. Whither my fate may conduct me I cannot surmise: this only can I promise—when I have passed the mighty ocean which now intervenes between me and the shores which I design to traverse, should opportunity offer, I will write to tell you of my fate."

"See you fail not," said Edmund, taking him by the hand, "and trust me I am sincere in wishing you better fortune."

He then stepped into the tent, as if to ascertain that

nothing belonging to his companions had been left behind, but really for the purpose of depositing his purse where Clifford would find it. This accomplished, he sprang on his horse with precipitation, to guard against his object being frustrated by premature discovery. Pronouncing the word "farewell," he darted into the road, and soon overtook Ferdinand and Mariana.

CHAPTER V.

——— His greedy eye admires
The more than human beauty of her face.
CHALKHILL.

THE travellers proceeded at a moderate pace, and speedily left behind many who had started from Canterbury on the preceding evening. Some of these were unable to advance from the state of intoxication into which they had fallen; others from fatigue were obliged to halt in the road till their wearied limbs should be rested; and many who, by their piety or their intemperance, had completely drained their purses, were too weak from want of sustenance to continue their journey, and their only hope of being enabled to reach their homes depended on the benevolence of those who might meet or overtake them by the way.

Ferdinand gazed on these deplorable objects with mingled pity and contempt. It was with infinite surprise that he beheld the long, the almost endless train of pilgrims to the tomb of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Though aware that the king of England, by his zeal for the church, had gained from the pope the distinction of "Defender of the faith," he had understood that the writings of Luther had produced too great a tendency to heresy among the common people, to make it likely that such considerable numbers should unite in honour of a religious celebration, connected with the ancient usages of the established church. Edmund had wished to see his companions amazed, but by no means for such a display as the miserable appearance and dissipated

conduct of the travellers they were mixed with presented to their observation.

Edmund's acquaintance with Ferdinand was of no very ancient date. He had been sent to Spain in the suite of the English ambassador. Returning, he was surprised by banditti in the passes of the Pyrences, and his life was on the point of being sacrificed, when he was rescued from danger by the intrepid and unexpected attack made by Ferdinand on the robbers. They, from the tone of authority in which, though unattended but by Mariana, he ordered others to advance, supposed him to be at the head of a military force, and fled. Edmund found with pleasure that the destination of his deliverer was the same as his own, and they thenceforward travelled together.

On their way, Edmund learned that his companions were not natives of Spain nor of England, though they spoke the language of each country with ease and fluency. The complexion of Ferdinand had a deeper tint than is commonly seen in that of an European. He was reserved, and somewhat abrupt when questioned about the place of his birth, and was evidently unwilling to speak on that subject.

Edmund admired the person of Mariana from the first moment he beheld her, and her attractions had increased every day which he had subsequently passed in her society. When he learned that she was shortly to become the inmate of an English convent, his admiration was associated with pity and regret. Hope that this might be averted, fear that it could not, invaded his bosom, and soon produced that restless, pleasing, painful confusion in his mind which is called love.

He endeavoured to persuade Ferdinand to change his purpose, but all Edmund's arguments were unsuccessful. In vain did he urge that it appeared not only lamentable, but even sinful, to consign such worth and beauty to the gloomy walls of a nunnery. The cold and tranquil reply of Ferdinand was equally prompt and simple, that the more virtuous and lovely the female so destined, the more worthy was she of her fate, for it would be too much to contend that such should be kept in the world, and that those who were not valued there, the depraved and the ugly, were good enough for God.

All that Edmund gained by reasoning with Ferdinand on

this subject, was a promise that he would not carry his design into execution immediately on his arrival in England. Ferdinand, however, took especial care to advertise Edmund, that he did not make this promise from the slightest change in his determination, but merely because he felt that it would be desirable to make some inquiries to guide his judgment in the selection of a convent.

But it was a relief to Edmund on any terms to gain a respite for the devoted fair one. His parents had died when he was an infant, and Lord Erpingham, who, as his guardian and the friend of his father, had proved himself ever anxious for his welfare, he doubted not would give his sanction to a union without which he could never be happy. Edmund therefore persuaded himself, that by gaining time in the first instance, he should pave the way for making such an appeal to the feelings and the understanding of Ferdinand, as would eventually prevail on him to abandon his design for ever.

The conversations which he had held with Mariana on their journey, when Ferdinand was not present, augmented his anxiety on this subject. Though meekly resigned, he found that she shrunk with terror from the contemplation of those vows which were speedily to separate her from the world. The lively interest which Edmund took in her fate, the tender assiduities which she remarked, to say nothing of his countenance or figure, made so strong an impression on her imagination, that, by the period down to which this narrative has been brought, she felt, submitting now to take the vows of a nun, she should be destined to mourn the absence of one not previously included among the friends from which it would be affliction to part.

Their journey was not a cheerful one. A variety of cares oppressed the heart of Ferdinand, which frequently caused him to be silent for hours. During these fits of abstraction Edmund and Mariana sometimes stole a look at each other; while sadly musing on that event, which the latter held to be inevitable, which the former was afflicted to consider probable, they feared the glances in which they now indulged were among the last that they could be permitted to exchange.

On the evening of the second day after their departure from Canterbury they reached London. As they crossed the bridge Edmund failed not to make his companions take notice of that ancient structure.

"Seldom," he remarked, "will you behold a work, raised by the hands of man, that shall be at once so magnificent and so durable. Hardly can you believe that the covered street through which we are passing is a bridge, formed of stone, and crossing the river of Thames. Yet such do I avouch it is, and of this shall you have demonstration anon by seeing the water between the houses."

He stopped, while he spoke, opposite the entrance of a narrow passage which separated two shops. At the further extremity there were iron pallisades, and through the spaces dividing them the river was visible.

"This noble building, which is justly the pride of our nation," said Edmund, "has already endured for centuries. And notwithstanding it sustains these tall houses, the height of which you cannot comprehend till we shall be fairly off the bridge itself, and that spacious chapel which you behold, it is not doubted but it will endure through centuries to come."

They proceeded through the narrow road which then existed between the shops established on each side, and under the chambers of the houses belonging to them, which covered in the way, with the exception of certain spaces left to admit light and air.

Ferdinand and Mariana did not disguise their admiration of the opulence and splendour of the capital of England to which they were now introduced. The streets were narrow, and the houses, principally built of wood with plaister, crossed and divided by enormous oaken beams, projected over the pathway. Each story of every house was more prominent than that beneath, so that where the buildings were lofty, and the street moderately wide, the attics nearly met. At all events they approached so close to each other, that persons in the garrets of two opposite houses might converse without having occasion to speak unusually loud. This mode of building was no temporary fashion. It was adhered to for ages, and on account of the variable climate, thought necessary, as the shelter houses thus formed were calculated to afford against sudden storms of rain, so fatal to modern finery, more than atoned for anything clumsy in their appearance. Decoration, however, was not disregarded in their construction. The cross-beams were painted black. and the brackets, which sustained the advance of each floor,

were generally decorated with images of angels, some of which were accommodated with singularly elegant wigs. These images, when newly painted, presented a rosy-cheeked group of guardian cherubim, which, though a little *outré*, might make some of the wigged and *painted* angels of modern date turn pale with envy.

Edmund and his companions took their way through Cornhill, and after he had directed their attention to the remains of the prison called from its shape *The Tun*, which stood in that street, but which had been suffered to go to decay, they passed to Cheapside, where they found the inhabitants in much confusion and alarm, in consequence of a fire having broken out in a mercer's house, which occupied the site of the old *Crownsilde*, or stone building, erected in earlier times for the accommodation of persons of distinction, who wished to witness the pageants of the city. The house on fire stood close to Bow Church, on the eastern side. A strong westerly breeze threatened to extend the calamity to the neighbouring houses. Fire-engines, such as we now see, were then unknown, and the substitutes for them which were used to oppose a spreading conflagation it is not easy to mention with gravity. The only way by which water could be opposed to the devouring element, at least the only improvement on the obvious mode of throwing it from common household vessels, was by *squirting* it from *syringes*.* These were of different sizes. The hand-syringe was about five feet long, and could throw water eighteen or twenty feet from the ground. A larger machine of the same kind was hung on wheels, and could be elevated or depressed at pleasure. It raised a more considerable body of water, when properly filled, than could be lifted by any other means. But the difficulty and delay which occurred in charging it from buckets, and the frequent miscarriages from the awkwardness of the men employed, several of whom were necessary, made it utterly useless where the flames had once burst forth with violence, but it sometimes prevented mis-

* Since the above was written this ancient invention has been revived. A "patent syringe" for opposing conflagration was exhibited in connection with the Smithfield cattle show for 1822, and, from the force and precision with which water could be conveyed through it to a particular spot, it seemed likely to be found of considerable importance in the absence of more potent means.

chief where the fire was slow in breaking out, and was therefore thought a most valuable invention. Several persons were using these instruments with much useless diligence, and the crowd collected round so obstructed the road, that Edmund found it necessary to alter his route. He accordingly turned back to the opening which they last passed on their right hand. This was St. Lawrence Lane, and it now struck him that he could not bestow his companions better than at *The Blossoms* inn. Thither he conducted them. The sign of St. Lawrence projected from the building, and the effigy of the saint was surrounded with a representation of the blossoms supposed to have flourished on the spot where he received the crown of martyrdom. To them the inn stood indebted for the name by which it was generally known, and which, at this day, survives the memory of the saint, so far as the inn is concerned.

At the Blossoms, on Edmund's recommendation, Ferdinand resolved to rest for the night. But Edmund thought it his duty to deny himself the gratification of remaining there. He was charged with letters to Lord Erpingham, which he had promised to deliver on his arrival in London before he slept. His lordship's residence was in Fickett's-fields, and Edmund having seen his travelling companions satisfactorily accommodated, took leave for the evening. He passed to the end of the lane, and turning to the left to Wood-street, went through Aldersgate, and thence by Little Britain, and Smithfield, to Holborn Bars. Fickett's-fields lay at the back of the Fleet-street end of Chancery-lane, and near the gate of Lincoln's-inn; several houses, the predecessors of those which now form a part of the east side of Bell-yard, were then but newly built. The place, as may be suspected from the name which it bore, was *widely* different from what it is at present. The house of Lord Erpingham had a meadow immediately before it, beyond which Drury House appeared. Looking over the garden of Lincoln's-inn it commanded a view of Cup-field, now Lincoln's-inn-fields, and part of Holborn. To the left the houses and spacious gardens of the Strand were seen.

Edmund had the good fortune to find that Lord Erpingham had not yet retired for the night, though the clock had struck nine. He was instantly admitted to the presence of

the peer, who congratulated him most cordially on his arrival in Fickett's-fields.

CHAPTER VI.

Fortune seems only to have her eye-sight
To behold my tragedy. WEBSTER.

LORD Erpingham had passed the prime of life. He had been much abroad in his younger days, and, from the knowledge which he had acquired, had been much courted by those who were in power in the early part of king Henry's reign. Even the haughty Wolsey had not disdained, notwithstanding the disparity of their years, to be guided in some instances by his advice. The fate of that extraordinary man, and the fall of Sir Thomas More, his lordship's particular friend, while they opened to him a prospect of gaining higher honours than had as yet requited him, relieved him from all anxiety to gain political distinction, if he had ever known it; and he calmly saw from his retirement bolder aspirants contend for that favour from the monarch, which had in various instances proved fatal to those who had had the good, or rather the evil fortune to gain it, without any wish to rival them. But though not in office, he laboured incessantly for the good of the state, and for that of mankind in general. If the common gaieties of life had little attraction for him, his establishment was not a small one, and the studies in which he engaged, and the inquiries to the prosecution of which he applied himself, caused him to employ, in addition to his ordinary domestics, a larger number of clerks than was commonly retained by any nobleman not officially connected with the government.

This peculiarity attracted notice. At first it was considered as the means by which Lord Erpingham designed, at some future period, to prove to the king his superiority in knowledge over those entrusted with the adminstration of the country. But when it was seen. that he persevered in the same course through a series of years, neglecting to avail himself of opportunities which presented themselves for

advancing such views, and willingly communicating to others what had been acquired by himself in extended and laborious investigations, the public generally recognized at last that very extraordinary character—a man who labours to deserve the gratitude of his countrymen, rather than to gain wealth or fame.

There were some, and it must be added that many who were best acquainted with his lordship's habits were among the number, who had taken up the idea, that the manner in which he had occupied himself was not entirely the result of patriotism. They suspected that a secret sorrow preyed upon his heart, which it was his object to dissipate, or in some degree shake off, by the mental exercise which he courted. That opinion derived plausibility from the uniform gravity, not to say the solemnity of his lordship's deportment, but it was not easy to determine whether this was the cause of his studies, or grew out of them as their natural effect.

If grief were familiar with Lord Erpingham, it was not accompanied with the impatience and irritation which in weak minds are commonly its offspring. Though a stranger to mirth, he was courteous; though he despised ostentation, he was hospitable; and though the prying might complain that he was to reserved, it was impossible even for them to deny that he was mild and benevolent to all.

Such had Edmund ever found the protector of his early youth. The unbending dignity which Lord Erpingham preserved, had taught him to approach with some degree of awe; but it was not that which dread of harshness might inspire, but solely that which was dictated by reverence for the virtues which adorned his character, and the talents and boundless information which he was reputed to possess.

Edmund met, as already has been stated, with a most cordial reception. His lordship listened with eager attention to his recital of what he had seen in his travels, and manifested the strongest interest in all that regarded him personally. The timely succour which Edmund had received from Ferdinand called forth admiration for the brave foreigner; but he seemed a little surprised at the warm panegyric which Edmund went on to pronounce, on the amiable qualities and superb beauty of Mariana.

"You speak of beauty, young man," said he, "with all

that romantic ardour which at your time of life it is fitted to inspire. I have now to communicate to you what it interests you not a little to know, and which cannot be other than gratifying to one of your temperament. Although I have ever discountenanced that impetuous pursuit of personal attractions, reckless of consequences, in which young men are but too often tempted to engage, while looking to other objects, it gave me pleasure to be enabled to secure you a wife, whose beauty is beyond compare, and whose approved virtue is not less entitled to admiration."

This intimation afforded Edmund more surprise than pleasure. From the manner in which the intelligence had been imparted, it was quite clear, that Lord Erpingham felt assured that it would gratify; but Edmund was too much confounded to be able to attempt reply. His lordship proceeded.

"I see the grateful intelligence is the more felt from the circumstauce of its being at this season wholly unexpected, But you shall be more rejoiced when you learn to whom you have been *sold*."

"My lord!" exclaimed Edmund breathless with amazement.

"I say," repeated his lordship, "you will the more rejoice (so at least I hope,) when you will know with whom this matter has been transacted, and happily advanced so far that I have actually *sold* you to the party."

The surprise of Edmund was at its height. It was not the word "*sold*," which now appears strange when applied to a matrimonal arrangement, that astonished him, but he was struck to hear that such a business was in progress, and near completion. At that period, though very great refinement was affected in many things, our language had not attained the finish which it has since received, and a very awkward practice, derived from earlier ages, still existed, that of calling things by their real names. The delicate circumlocution adopted by modern taste was as yet not valued. The number of matrimonial *sales* effected in our time, is as great as at any former date; but from the superior phraseology employed we hear of nobody being *sold*.

The confusion, and indeed the agitation of Edmund did not escape Lord Erpingham; but he was nothing disconcerted by it. He was fully convinced, that he possessed

the means of dismissing all uneasiness, and serenely continued.

"Remember you not the beautiful Elinor Brandon, the daughter of Sir Geoffrey Brandon?—"

"I do remember her well, and I also remember—"

"That I once chid you for looking on her as you did, and for following her, as it seemed to me, too anxiously."

"Even so. You then told me, that I must think of her no more, as she was destined to be the wife of—" Edmund paused. Recollection of a recent unexpected meeting came over him, and embarrassed his speech. He endeavoured to break through it, and said, "You told me, my lord, that she was to be the wife of another."

"True. All was arranged, and it was my expectation, ere this, to see her bless with her hand my nephew Clifford. But he has unhappily forgotten those principles with which I sought to store his mind in infancy. Not to dwell on a subject so painful, he proved himself unworthy of her, and I, knowing your mind, have placed your name where his, had previously stood."

He then produced a legal instrument, which began as follows:

"This indenture made the fourth daye of Apryll, yn the —— yere of o^r^ Souearigne Lorde Kyng Henry the viijth, the William Lord Erpingham of the oon partie, and Sir Geoffrey Brandon, knight, esquyer for the body of o^r^ saide Soveraigne Lord the Kyng, and son and herre of Sir Thomas Brandon discessed, of the other partie: witnessith, that the saide Lord William Erpingham hath bargayned, solde and graunted, and by these presents bargayneth, selleth and grauntith to the saide Sir Geoffrey, the ward, custodye, and maryage of the bodie of Edmund, son and herre of Henry Sherborn discessed, to thentente only that he the saide Edmund shall marye and take to wyfe oon of the two daughters of the saide Geoffrey, that is to say, Elinor and Mary; that is to wyte, such one of them as the said Edmund shall thereunto appoynte and chouse: the said appointment and choyse to be made by the said Edmund Sherborn on this side the feaste of Easter next comyng; yf the said Elinor or Mary, either of the ym, to the said maryage wyll assente."

When Edmund had read thus far, Lord Erpingham, who had evidently anticipated some exclamation of delight, again broke silence.

"Judged I not aright? Did I not venture well in thus procuring your name to be inserted in place of that of the unworthy Clifford?"

"In this, as in all other instances, I am much indebted to your lordship. But I must add, that from the period when you admonished me, I endeavoured to turn my thoughts wholly from the fair Elinor. An absence of three years, added to a sense of duty, has enabled me to succeed so completely, that, believe me, I feel more grief for Clifford's miscarriage than I know how to express. It is indeed so great, that my heart owns none of that joy, which tidings like those now communicated would once have inspired."

"But your delight will be great when you shall see Elinor, for she, I know, is the daughter on whom your attention rested, though, to guard against the possibility of mistake, I judged it was wise to have the names of the two sisters inserted in the instrument. Her beauty has gained a perfection of which, bright as her attractions were formerly, they gave but imperfect promise. So I have heard from others, not having seen her myself past a year, she having preferred retirement, evincing thereby a becoming and discreet taste, which you will not fail to approve."

"I question not her perfection, but—"

"But you still regret the loss your former companion must sustain. That is not uncommendable in you, but bootless must it be to think of it."

"I know it, my lord. He cannot now aspire to the Lady Elinor, seeing he is already married to another."

"How know you that? Have you seen him of late?"

"Being asked the question, my answer must be 'yes' but for particulars, I pray your lordship spare me."

"Resolve me one thing. Did he speak to you of the crime which has cast him out from the bosom of that society in which he was born?"

"He told me of his sufferings."

"And concealed their cause."

"Not so—at least, I cannot say so. He named to me the charges preferred against him, but owned no guilt."

"I am sad to hear it. Trust me, it was my hope that one of my blood would not long retain the hardened front which he displayed on trial, when his criminality wa

established to the satisfaction of all good men—to my deep affliction."

"He told me of his conviction; but he also told me, that it was procured by foulest perjury."

"Base and impenitent as he has been found, I should have expected that with you he would have been sufficiently ingenuous to lay aside dissimulation. But alas! become familiar with iniquity, he will not abstain from it for a moment, even where its exercise may answer no purpose."

"Pardon me, my lord, but I must doubt the correctness of this conclusion. He spoke with an earnestness which I would fain believe marked sincerity."

"The hypocrite! Such carriage costs him little effort. When you shall know the evidence which was brought against him, and know with what unblushing effrontery he imputed the most fearful perjuries to men of holy life, you will better understand how to appreciate his words."

"I cannot but hope that you will find, that in this case you have been deceived."

"Edmund, I think I have had more opportunities of seeing men than many, and am not less capable of judging of their motives than others. It is probable that I flatter myself, but the world, I believe, share this opinion."

"Most assuredly."

"Yet if I, so skilled, could own the condemnation of my own nephew just—if I could believe one for whom, you know, I had ever been accustomed to interest myself, who was indeed most dear—I say, if I could be convinced that he was guilty of the crime imputed to him, think you that his *dictum*, degraded as he now is, ought to weigh against the testimony of better men, and all the circumstances of judicial proof."

"It is hard to judge."

"It will not be so long. When you shall know the circumstances, and, above all, when you shall know the character of him whom Clifford aspersed, you will not fail to come to that conclusion, which, God my Saviour knows, I most reluctantly arrived at."

"You speak of the abbot of Leadenhall."

"The same. He was one of the monks of Mount Sinai. It was on my invitation that he came to England, and accepted that dignity which he now enjoys. I should confess

that it was with a view to my own solace that I brought him hither; for while in the east, his spiritual advice had much advantage to me. You shall shortly know him, and then for Clifford, all you can do, will be to join with me in supplicating the Most High to turn him from his evil doings, since to doubt his past turpitude will be impossible."

CHAPTER VII.

Far other scenes must soon present my sight,
That lie deep buried yet in tenfold night.

FALCONER.

EDMUND felt more disturbed by the communication made to him respecting Elinor Brandon than he chose to acknowledge. Her charms had made but a momentary impression. Having no hope of gaining her affections, he had ceased to think of her, and now, when her name was mentioned to him, far from waking those transports which Lord Erpingham had supposed it would call forth, he only remembered that he had once thought Elinor beautiful, while the passion which he had conceived for Mariana grew stronger, as the prospect of gaining her seemed more decidedly closed.

Kind as he had ever known Lord Erpingham, he wanted resolution to tell that the beauty he once admired, while Elinor was the intended bride of another, now that she was destined for him, he no longer desired to obtain. He could not doubt but his lordship would feel much hurt to find the efforts made to promote his happiness thus requited; nor could he expect that a nobleman of his years and prudence would listen with patience to any proposition for breaking his engagement with a young lady of fortune, in order to enable Edmund to solicit the hand of a female he had known but a few weeks, and with whose connections he was wholly unacquainted.

He had felt that, under the most favourable circumstances, the mention of such an idea would be likely to startle his lordship; but the difficulty was immeasurably increased by the step which had been taken in his absence.

Yet he flattered himself that a knowledge of Mariana

would do something towards inclining Lord Erpingham to consider if it were possible to give up the projected match with the Brandon family. He was therefore anxious that she, with her brother, should accept of an invitation with which he had been charged by his lordship. But Ferdinand declined accepting it till the business which brought him to England, so far as his niece was concerned, could be arranged. In pursuance of this object, his days were occupied in inquiring for the convents judged to be the best regulated, and in ascertaining the rules by which they were governed.

It was in vain that Edmund pressed him to allow himself repose but for a single day. Ferdinand peremptorily refused. The more pressing Edmund became for him to accept the invitation of Lord Erpingham, the more determined was Ferdinand to refuse. Edmund hoped, from taking her to his lordship, that the plan of shutting her up in a convent might be abandoned. Ferdinand feared that from letting her see the splendid varieties which opulence might be prepared to set before them, it would become more painful, if not more difficult, to carry it into effect.

In conversation, Ferdinand did not conceal from Edmund that one motive for placing Mariana in a convent with little delay, sprung from an apprehension that the state of his funds would make it necessary, at no distant period, for him to return to Spain, unless he should find employment in England. Edmund expressed his conviction that, possessing as he did the Spanish and several other languages, there would be no difficulty in turning his abilities to account in England. On this subject he proposed to make some inquiries. Ferdinand thanked him, but expressed no solicitude about the result.

"Mariana disposed of," said he, "my wants will probably not affect me long."

It was his wish to avoid all public spectacles. But one day, being at Mile End, where a great display of archery was to take place, and not having Mariana with him, he was induced to pause for a short time, to witness an exhibition which the king himself did not think it beneath him to attend.

Edmund had accompanied Ferdinand, and failed not to apprize him of the several regulations which had been made to guard against any interruption of the sports by the incon-

venient pressure of the crowd. He especially cautioned him against standing too forward when the word "Fast" should be given; as after that had been called aloud, no penal consequences would attach to wounding the spectator who neglected to withdraw, even though death should ensue. This was the will of the king, who considered the lives of a few subjects had better be sacrificed than that the science of archery should be discouraged, by suffering those who practised it to be intruded upon with impunity.

A chair, elevated on a small platform and covered with crimson satin, had been placed for the king, of which his majesty now took possession. He wore, placed a little aslant, a black velvet bonnet circled with a silver band, and surmounted by a small plume of feathers. A blue cloak, bordered with flowers worked in gold, and ornamented with a large cape of spotted fur, concealed the remainder of his dress. Henry's eyes glistened with mirth while he gave command that the sports should begin, and ordered the yeomen in his train to assist the archers who were clearing the ground.

While this work was in progress, a person with a very consequental air, but attired in a soiled leathern doublet, made his appearance. He wore a bonnet of coarse cloth, ornamented with a gilded button. The lower part of his dress was of cloth, including his stockings, which were appendages to what a polite writer must name inexpressibles.

As this individual bustled by, calling out in an authoritative tone for all to retire who "had no humour to taste the point of an arrow," Ferdinand, surprised at the contrast between the humility of his dress and the loftiness of his deportment, desired to know the rank of so singular a character.

"He is called a duke," Edmund replied. "You are surprised to find that his exterior so little accords with that of a Spanish duke."

"Making all allowances for the varying customs of different nations, I confess myself amazed."

"And justly, but I must explain; this fellow is not of our nobility, but a mere citizen, a bowyer by trade. He, on a former occasion, so distinguished himself in the exercise of archery, that the king being present, and in merry mood, for the shooting was in honour of his third marriage, a

within a week of the beheading of Queen Ann, he, I say, being then exhilarated, did dub this same fellow *Duke of Shoreditch*, a mean little parish some way north of London."

"A singular promotion."

"A jocular burlesque on one; but the man, (his name is Barlow,) took it seriously, and holds himself, from this circumstance, a personage of no small importance, and, neglecting business, as I hear, his shop in Shoreditch (which, being in the fields, is but a thinly peopled parish) is fast falling to decay."

"His greatness then, as in other cases it often chances, is like to be his ruin."

"Even so; but this mockery has called forth others who would fain be regarded as of the same class of nobles. The Marquis of Clerkenwell, with the Earls of Hoxton (or Hogsden, as it is commonly named,) of Pancras and Shacklewell, will be here anon."

While he was yet speaking, several of these gentry made their appearance. They passed to the stand, their horns sounded, and every thing announced that the sports were forthwith to commence.

"Would you see our real nobility," said Edmund, "look on those who stand on either hand of the king. That elderly peer, to whom his majesty now speaks, and who is pointing to Barlow, is the Duke of Norfolk. Near him, on the right, in the brown velvet cloak, stands his son the Earl of Surrey."

Ferdinand looked on these, and suddenly started, while with breathless agitation he inquired, "And who—who stands next to that young nobleman?"

"On the right?"

"No, on the left, a little in advance. He who is attired in black, with a long white beard."

"That is my excellent friend, Lord Erpingham."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ferdinand, shrinking as it were within himself while he spoke, and looking stedfastly on Edmund.

The latter was struck with the manner of Ferdinand.

"What moves you thus?" he demanded.

"I—I—I did not expect to see *him* here."

"Doubtless you have heard that he is little wont to frequent public spectacles; but in scenes like these he takes much interest, for he apprehends (the fear seems to me a

vain one,) that if archery be not especially protected, the use of the musket will, in time, cause the bow and arrow to fall wholly into disuse."

"Is it even so?" Ferdinand muttered in a tone which left it doubtful whether he intended to address another or was speaking to himself. Edmund hesitated for a moment, but assuming that the question had been put to him, proceeded.

"I, for my own part, though extravagance can rarely be imputed to Lord Erpingham, hold his dread in this instance to be wholly chimerical. The rage for musketry will, I doubt not, prove but a fashion, and, to my thinking, its day has already nearly passed away."

"Fast," roared a voice of stentorian power.

The well known sound was repeated by hundreds of tongues on every side, and a general movement backward took place, accompanied by some little contention. Those who had occupied the forbidden spot were anxious that their neighbours who had not come too forward, should give way, so that they, without breaking the line to be kept for the archers, might still be in front. This was not readily acquiesced in by the persons who were already at the most advanced point. They were disposed to let the others pass behind them, but would not consent to retreat themselves. Edmund stepped back, and expected Ferdinand would do the same; but he, wholly unmindful of what he had been told, remained where he had previously stood. Edmund called to him, but in the confusion which came over him, instead of retiring, Ferdinand went several paces forward. The clamour of the multitude warned him of his danger, but too late, for the first arrow took its flight at the moment he stepped from the side, and was already fixed in his shoulder.

Great disorder followed. The shooting was suspended, and the spectators again occupied that ground from which they had so lately been excluded. The Earl of Surrey and Lord Erpingham hastened to the wounded man. Ferdinand thanked the former for his attention; but when Lord Erpingham told him that assistance should be forthwith procured, he snatched the arrow from his flesh, and turned away abruptly.

Edmund withdrew with Ferdinand, saw his wound dressed,

and attended him to his home, which was at the house of a merchant in Gutter, or, as it was then called, Gouter-lane, to whom he had been furnished with an introduction. On their way he noticed the manner in which Ferdinand had received the attentions of Lord Erpingham, and regretted that he had not made a more suitable return.

His answer was equivocal—"I regret," said he, "that it was not in my power."

Edmund supposed him to be sorry that pain had made him forget his customary regard for courtesy, and expressed an opinion, that what he must have endured might well account for that which, under other circumstances, would appear extraordinary.

"I spoke not of pain; I felt none," said Ferdinand. "But let us discourse no more on this subject. My wound is slight, and merits not attention. In a day or two it will be healed."

The injury he had sustained was inconsiderable. He soon resumed his inquiries respecting the religious establishments of England. That of St. Helen, or Elene, in Bishopsgate, seemed to him preferable to the others with which he had become acquainted. Report, however, spoke favourably of a small convent at Shene, and he therefore made a point of visiting that place before he came to a final decision. The information he obtained there did not produce any impression unfavourable to the pretensions of the sisterhood of Saint Helen. While at Shene, he paused for a moment to look at the royal palace, which then existed on that delightful spot. Mariana, who had accompanied him thither, viewed, with unspeakable admiration, the beauties of the captivating scene. She gazed alternately, with unwearied eyes, now on the matchless work of nature's embellishing hand, and now on the ingenious efforts which art and labour had made to decorate the grounds adjoining the palace. They skirted the gardens, till they came to a place where a running stream parted them from a hedge, fantastically trained, so as to exhibit the objects it defended, in situations the most pleasingly picturesque.

Mariana looked with wonder and delight, but her pleasure was of brief duration. She recollected how soon she was to be withdrawn from the contemplation of objects like those which charmed her, and a thrill of agony ran through her

delicate frame, which was nothing diminished by the consciousness that it had not escaped the observation of Ferdinand, whose lowering eye already reproved her wandering.

CHAPTER VIII.

Through life's sad journey, hopeless to complain,
Can sacred justice these events ordain?
But, O my soul! avoid that wondrous maze,
Where reason, lost in endless error, strays.
As through this thorny vale of life we run,
Great cause of all effects, Thy will be done.
FALCONER.

"I NOTE," said Ferdinand, "and I must confess it, I have done so with pain, that your eyes sparkle with transport while you gaze on this fair prospect. It is not my object to rebuke, yet I cannot choose but regret that such is your frame of mind."

"And why, permit me to inquire? Think you a scene so enchantingly gay was not fashioned to glad those who were created to people it."

"Yes, Mariana; but you are not of them. I have said I would not reprehend you, for I know that when heaven shines in cloudless majesty, the clear transparent wave will copy its gayest hue, and your mind, as yet transparent as that same wave, and ready to reflect back every object in its brightest colours, might well be expected to throw that mingled joy and sorrow into your countenance, which you have not art to conceal.—But let me conjure you to detach your mind from such scenes. Other images should occupy your contemplation. I would know your thoughts fixed on that hallowed gloom which awaits you in the bosom of the convent you are shortly to enter. The sacred thoughts which shall there ever be present to the pious imagination, will more than compensate for the loss of such glittering trifles as now court the view, and holy hope will shed over the most sombre moments of a cloistered life, a portion of the radiance of the blissful eternity to which it leads."

Mariana was silent. But her eyes dwelt on the beautifully

diversified prospect with a melancholy air, and with a fondly eager gaze, which seemed at once anxious and reluctant to bid them an everlasting farewell. The reflection that her charmed sense might rest on such a picture no more, caused a tear to tremble on her eyelid. Ferdinand remarked it, and while a sympathising pang invaded his own bosom, he made a new effort by argument to diminish the affliction of his niece.

"This is weakness, Mariana. Reason and religion should unite to expel from your heart the treacherous foe to its repose, which, seeking to wed your affections to earthly pleasure, would bereave you of your eternal inheritance."

"Forgive mé," sighed Mariana, attempting, but in vain, to repress the sob which agitated her bosom.

While she spoke a butterfly flitted by them, of that species which modern naturalists have denominated *the peacock*. Its brilliant variegated wings rivetted the attention of both, while, having passed the water which divided them from the hedge, they saw it sportively bound from flower to flower, and at length pause to bask at its ease, and to display, luxuriously reposing in the bosom of a newly blown rose, its minute but splendid plumage to the noon-day sun.

"Behold," said Mariana, "how that unreasoning insect gives himself up to unrestricted enjoyment of the banquet which Nature's liberal hand has spread before him. Is it sin in him to be happy?—O! no, my uncle will not tell me that; nor will he say that heaven meant to deny to its more important creation the bliss conferred on this poor slave of instinct."

Ferdinand was embarrassed. He, however, replied. "His all of happiness is here. We have to look forward to another life."

"And why should it be assumed that our welfare in another state will be promoted by rejecting the proffered bounty of the Creator in this?—Why should we deny ourselves the guiltless enjoyment of the pure air; of the light of heaven; and the decorated surface of the earth?"

Ferdinand seemed disposed to answer the objection, but found himself at a loss for words. Musing on what Mariana had just said, his eye steadily pursued the course of the insect they had observed, which continued to woo, in succession, the most distinguished ornaments of the *parterre*.

His whole observation appeared to rest on it, that he might conceal from Mariana the embarrassment he experienced. On a sudden he saw the butterfly impeded in its flight, and perceived, in the next moment, that it was entangled in the web of a spider. Its desperate struggles to escape shook every thread of the fatal snare, the texture of which, however, was too strong to be broken by them, and the spider was seen to dart on his helpless victim. The butterfly perished in the embrace of his tremendous enemy, and the spider having banquetted on his prize, threw round it a new web, the strings of which were drawn so tight, that the form of the dead insect was no longer preserved, and drawing it thus compressed to the upper part of his abode, he retired, to await the coming of a new prey.

Mariana wept the fate of the insect, and regretted that interposing obstacles had put it out of her power to prevent the spider from completing his triumph. Ferdinand saw she was affected, and resumed the conversation, by referring to the object which had just fallen under their observation.

"Heaven has sent an argument to supply my lack of wit. But a few moments ago you gazed on the gay flutterer which glistened before us, with feelings of regret that you might not be permitted, like him, to rove at pleasure among the alluring beauties of nature. Do you see him now?"

Mariana answered but by a sigh.

"Where now is the happiness which lately you could envy? Where the bright colours which commanded admiration? Where the bounding joy which every motion indicated? All are no more. The poor fly has been destroyed, and its remains, enveloped in a loathsome veil, rifled, discoloured, marred in every respect, present to the view but a shapeless offensive object in the web of the destroyer. Such are the consequences of being at liberty to rove at large in quest of pleasure."

"Aye, my dear uncle, to butterflies which roam where spiders are to be found. But this applies not to other beings. I am in no danger from spiders."

"True, Mariana, but you are likely to fall in the way of a more formidable, as well as a more odious destroyer. This spider is a poor artisan, who has but used the means which nature gave him to procure sustenance. He has destroyed his victim to nourish himself. But monsters are

to be found, who, urged by no such imperious necessity, will destroy, for very sport, and hold the shipwreck of your hope to be the consummation of their triumph."

"But there are no monsters which can here destroy human beings."

"Women are destroyed, and the destroyers are men. It is from these that I would preserve innocence. I but seek thy soul's health, when I withdraw thee from the world. Yielding to my wish, it is true, that thou must abandon some objects, which in youth it is natural that thou shouldest wish to cherish; but for these thou shalt be more than compensated by being protected against dangers which might blast thee in thy prime, and give thee an old age of vain remorse."

"I could only feel remorse from guilt. Is it because you think me depraved that you would place me in a convent?"

"No, dearest, but because I know thee pure, and would preserve thee so. I would not leave thee exposed to the snares which treachery prepares. Thy inexperience, thy very virtue, would betray thee into the toils that crime would spread for unsuspecting feet. Alone, thou couldest not escape them."

"Alone! but why should I be left alone? Cannot you, who have hitherto protected me, continue to be my protector?"

"That is not certain. I may, and probably I shall, soon be withdrawn—withdrawn for ever."

"Withdrawn for ever! What awful meaning lurks beneath your words! Unwonted sadness sits upon your cheek. What has chanced? Tell me, I pray, whence these sad forebodings."

"Mariana, we are strangers in a foreign land—a land which I have doubtless sought with much anxiety, but still in England we are, as I may say, alone. What security is there against the precariousness of human life? The climate, and diseases incidental to it, may snatch me away in a few days, and is it not my duty to provide for the safety of the being confided to my care, before an event so probable shall take place?"

With a most stedfast gaze Mariana regarded him while he spoke. She saw in his whole manner an anxious desire to diminish the effects of the words which had previously

escaped, and which had alarmed her; she could not help feeling persuaded that he had contemplated some danger more imminent and appalling than that of climate, or any arising from the accidents to which human beings, in the ordinary course of events, are exposed everywhere.

"There is something," she said, "which you would conceal from me. I tremble, but know not why. Let me not leave you, if you are exposed to peril."

"Be calm, Mariana. There is no immediate peril; and if there were, could it be removed by your presence?"

"You wish to hold the language of comfort, but your tongue refuses obedience to your will. When you tell me that there is no immediate danger, I cannot but infer both that there is danger, and that it is not very remote. Part with me not under such circumstances."

"No more of this. I have solemn duties to perform. To these, my life is devoted, and it may be that I shall not long survive their fulfilment. To you, my cares are in the first instance directed. Withdrawn from the busy world, to Mariana it will matter little, in her holy retirement, whether I still live, or am released from the cares of existence. From the moment when you are received into that society of which you are to become a member, you will see me and, I trust, hear of me no more."

The last words of Ferdinand inflicted a shock on the feelings of Mariana for which she was not prepared. With imploring look, she exclaimed—

"O! say not so. If I must resign the hope of ever seeing you again, when once I have taken the veil, much as I wish to submit with becoming resignation to that which you recommend, I know not how my lips can be taught to pronounce the vows, and feel that my heart can never be reconciled to the melancholy, the eternal separation."

"Mariana, I have wished to watch over your interest as might become a father or a brother. Were it permitted, I could view you with a lover's eye; but, at all events, I think you cannot doubt that your welfare is the object of my earnest solicitude, and pursuing it, I trust I have never been unkind."

"Our separation will therefore be the more insupportable."

"It is inevitable. Fate wills it. I announce it with pain;

but this, sad as it is, I am decidedly of opinion will be less painful than the wretched alternative I could offer."

"Impossible! Let me still remain near you."

"Ask it not. Have I not told you of the danger?"

"I will brave it all."

"It may not be. This, Mariana, is, I fear, a return of your fond lingerings after the gaieties of life."

"O no! I was thinking but of you; yet still must I confess that there is something terrific in being withdrawn from liberty, to pine through life encircled by the gloomy walls of a convent."

"I know it well, nor can I blame the regrets which I wish to subdue. But I have already intimated that we have but a choice of evils."

"What evils can exceed those in magnitude which she must deplore who sees herself withdrawn from all that she could prize in life, to pine in solitude?"

"Those," answered Ferdinand, "which not merely afflict for a season, but which destroy. Look again on yonder fly, now so changed in appearance that you can scarce recognise it, or believe that it is the same insect which recently claimed our admiration. Had it not been better for him that he should have remained in the shady retreat from which he issued, and thus escaped the snare which had been woven for him? Fiercer enemies, and more subtle snares, await you. You see them not; but were it well that I, who am aware of them, should weakly yield to your wishes to be near me, and thus expose you to destruction?"

Mariana looked at the dead insect; she sighed deeply, but attempted no reply.

CHAPTER IX.

A behaviour so noble
As gives a majesty to adversity:
You may discern the shape of loveliness
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles.

WEBSTER.

FERDINAND now considered that he had made sufficient inquiry into the state of religious societies in England, and

that nothing now remained but to carry his resolution into effect, and he accordingly required Mariana to prepare herself speedily to join the pious sisterhood of St. Helen.

Aware of his intentions, Edmund had on every occasion ventured to combat them, but no impression could be made on Ferdinand. He had sufficient to provide for her in the way he proposed, but not enough, as he alleged, to establish her as he could desire in any other situation. Edmund made light of this objection, and hesitated not to declare that "He should esteem himself the happiest of mortals if permitted to aspire to her hand, though unendowed with fortune and those common-place advantages which others might deem of importance."

Ferdinand answered "I question not your sincerity, and your liberality demands my admiration. I know you would feel as you say; but I know also your imagination is filled with gay smiles, bright eyes, ruby lips, and the other attributes of youth and loveliness. When these shall fade, or when you, from becoming more familiar with them, shall not find them call forth all the ecstacy which they now inspire, then painful reflection will succeed to a transient dream of happiness; the reproaches of your friends, for the imprudence of which you have been guilty, will no longer be disregarded; and you will lament that it was ever your lot to meet with me."

"And can you think that I should ever—"

"That you would ever be base? No; but I believe that you would be unhappy. That Mariana, from being deemed a blessing, would be viewed as an incumbrance."

"Never."

"I may not, therefore, encourage a passion which, however pure, is not founded on reason. Could you persuade me that all whose opinions you regard concurred in approving those feelings which you avow, even then I must withhold my consent."

"Indeed! it must be, then, because I have failed to win your good opinion."

"Not so, by heaven!" cried Ferdinand, taking Edmund by the hand, while he trembled with emotion. "I esteem, I love you as a brother, and that esteem and love would, even in the case I have supposed, dictate the course which I have announced it to be my purpose to pursue. Believe

that I have spoken the truth, but ask not my reasons. I would spare you and Mariana pain, and having that object in view, I must be deaf to your entreaties."

"You have fears that I should find you burdensome, but these are idle."

"My objection springs not thence. But it is in vain to talk on this subject—no argument that man can use—no event that Fortune can accomplish, may change my resolution."

Edmund was distressed, but the double barrier opposed to his wishes—the engagements entered into by Lord Erpingham, and the fixed resolution of Ferdinand—united to annihilate hope. He was willing to believe that the former might be evaded by some means, but the latter presented a difficulty perfectly insuperable. What had fallen from Ferdinand, on the subject of his funds, had led him to endeavour, without wounding his pride, to furnish the means of improving his condition. He flattered himself that he had done so with success; and though, after what had just been stated, this did not promise a change in his determination, he now mentioned it, anxious to confer a benefit, though destroyed the expectation that it would contribute to the accomplishment of the object which most deeply interested himself.

"Be assured of this, Ferdinand," said Edmund, "your fortunes will speedily improve. I was not deceived in thinking that your talents might be advantageously employed in England, and am already authorised to offer you two appointments."

"I am much beholden to your friendship. What are they?"

"The first is the situation of secretary to Lord Erpingham."

"Is it possible! This is beyond my hope," and his eyes sparkled with unwonted fire while he spoke. "Tell me, will not such appointment give me admission to his house?"

"Most certainly. You, will, moreover, be constantly with him in his closet, and you will be treated most confidentially. But a higher office is opened for you, which will place you in immediate attendance on the king."

"Name it not; I have no ambition."

"You are wise. I would rather share the confidence of a

nobleman so virtuous as Lord Erpingham, than hold a higher station."

"*Is* Lord Erpingham so virtuous?" inquired Ferdinand.

"Why that scrurinizing, doubting look? Have you heard any one in England speak disparagingly of Lord Erpingham?"

"No."

"Or out of England."

"I never heard the name till I came to this country?"

"Why then that seeming doubt?"

"The boldness of your speech might challenge it. But resolve me one thing; was this virtuous lord ever in Mexico?"

"In early life, he was there. He was one of the original followers of Cortes."

"It is the same!" Ferdinand exclaimed, speaking to himself.

"Know you aught respecting his carriage while there?"

"Nothing worthy your ear. And *I*," said Ferdinand, with peculiar emphasis, "may be his confidential assistant."

"If you prefer that to the higher situation?"

"I would prefer it to a throne," cried Ferdinand, with energy. "But he is your friend. I must not accept the boon from you."

Edmund supposed Ferdinand was unwilling to accept a benefit, after opposing his wishes with respect to Mariana, and hastened to assure him, that whatever might be his determination in other matters, it would gratify him to be the means of administering to his comfort. Ferdinand seemed at first not to hear, but the sounds lingered on his ear, and he replied—

"True. You are generous and sincere. Perhaps it is a vain qualm that disturbs me. I will tell you, anon, my determination."

He spoke in a hurried manner, and retired while yet speaking, as if to conceal the emotion which he could not subdue.

The manner in which his intelligence had been received embarrassed Edmund not a little, but he had not time to muse on it, for Mariana now entered, and in her presence he was conscious of but one feeling, affliction at the prospect of losing her.

She entered with a look of tranquil resignation, but her eyes were dimmed by sorrow, and a less attentive observer than Edmund might have discovered that she had recently been in tears. He approached her with tenderness.

"Mariana," said he, "I derive a mournful satisfaction from seeing you once more, and alone."

"Alas!" she replied, "I share not your satisfaction. Thus to meet, only to pronounce an eternal adieu, inflicts a pang which both might well have been spared."

"Not so; for though denied to entertain the hope which I would fain have cherished, to see you even under such circumstances is a luxuary which I would not deny my charmed senses for all the earth affords. But much I grieve to say, my efforts to change the resolution of your uncle have all proved unavailing."

"I know he is not to be shaken. A sense of duty urges him on, and, satisfied that his decision is dictated by anxious love, I wish to bow to it without repining, but cannot without pain."

"All things conspire to cloud the prospect, which I fondly, foolishly trusted, would become so enchantingly bright on my arrival in England. Lord Erpingham, acting most kindly, and believing that his doings would pleasure me, while I was from home, bound me by indenture to wed another, whose beauty in other days had won my boyish admiration."

Mariana could not repress a sudden throb at hearing this, but instantly recovering her firmness, she mildly replied,

"May you—may you be happy!"

"Not with her, Mariana," was the answer. "Come what may, if you are destined never to be mine, I will lead no other to the hymeneal altar."

The solemn resolution with which he announced this determination affected her; she faltered.

"Forget me, Edmund—forget me, and be happy."

"The advice is vain. No; since you are torn from my view to lead a cloistered life, though I may not be your companion, I will share the same fate. Dismissed the gallant and aspiring projects which once warmed my heart, I give up all thoughts of earthly happiness, all dreams of fame. While you pass to a convent, I will to a monastery."

"To a monastery!"

"I have said it. The same exercises shall unceasingly

unite us in thought, and the day may wear away less sadly from the idea, which every passing hour will suggest, that it has brought us nearer to that which shall admit our emancipated spirits to an everlasting union in a happier state of being. May I trust that you will share these feelings."

"O doubt it not! In this moment which must part us for ever, I forget my former reserve, and freely, frankly promise, when I rise to matins, I will think of Edmund. Through the live-long day your name shall have a place in my prayers, be tenderly remembered in the even-song, and when the compline has terminated the appointed duties of the day, my last thought shall dwell on you."

"Blest assurance! This shall sweeten penance, and lift my soul above all sense of pain. Remembering that through Mariana I became what I purpose to be, her image will unceasingly attend me, and still suggesting holier hope and higher wishes, to think on thee shall be religion."

Ferdinand entered.

"I am at length resolved," he said. "The situation which you offer, I will accept. Mariana will leave me immediately, and I shall be wholly at Lord Erpingham's service."

Edmund attempted to express satisfaction, but his eyes were rivetted on Mariana.

"I see," said Ferdinand, "how your minds are affected. You rightly anticipate, that from this hour you meet no more. To protract such an interview, were but to lengthen pain, so let us hasten to separate."

He took Mariana by the hand; she required the support of his arm. As he sustained, he bent over her, with a look of inexpressible tenderness. His eyes reddened, and it was only by a violent effort, which caused a convulsive distortion of his features for an instant, that he could refrain from tears.

"Trust me," said he, "my affliction is great, thus rudely to separate hearts formed to bless each other; but it may not be otherwise. You, Edmund, will one day own that I could not forego this duty. Sadness invades my bosom, but cannot change my purpose."

"Must we—must we part?" inquired Edmund.

"There is no alternative," Ferdinand replied, with much agitation. He added, in a tone of decisive firmness, "The decree is irrevocable."

CHAPTER X.

Some strange presages in my mind forebode,
The worst of mis'ries or the greatest good.

POMFRET.

EDMUND felt that to change the purpose of Ferdinand, even if the disgrace of Clifford had not induced Lord Erpingham to take the step on which he had ventured, was a task beyond his powers, and he retired in despair. His mind was, however, fully made up, in no case to become the husband of Lady Elinor. Hope was annihilated, and he now looked for no greater comfort on earth than that which he expected to realise in devout seclusion from the world. He was concerned that it became necessary to subject Lord Erpingham to new disappointment, but, fixed to act on the resolution which he had announced to Mariana, he resolved to communicate it without delay.

For this purpose he repaired to Fickett's-fields. He found his friend, and with him the abbot of Mount Sinai, as the peer was accustomed to call Father Egbert. Though much occupied with his own concerns, Edmund started on learning that he saw the monk, who, according to Clifford, had degraded himself by acts of the most fearful depravity.

But in the appearance of Father Egbert there was nothing to indicate a dissolute life, or a malignant spirit. His countenance was free from wrinkles, but there was nevertheless a sufficient appearance of age to avert the idea that he was unqualified by years to hold the high situation which he filled. His large black eye had not that fiery lustre which seems to pierce the object it beholds; but where it rested, serenely observant, without any effort that could surprise or alarm, it read with facility the disposition, the mood, and almost the particular thoughts of the individual who attracted its attention.

"Behold," said Lord Erpingham, "the venerable character whom the fallen and wretched man you have lately seen continues to asperse. This is the worthy and enlightened superior of the priests of the Trinity of Leadenhall. I would you had been here some hour or more ago, then should you have seen what would have carried conviction to your mind

of that baseness, on the part of Clifford, which you could scarcely believe had existence."

"Has the holy father laid new proofs before your lordship?" Edmund inquired, in a tone of sadness which seemed to Lord Erpingham to border on the sarcastic, and he replied with much gravity—

"You seem incredulous still; and the manner of your question marks a suspicion which is most unfounded. The worthy father has brought me proof of his benign disposition, by bringing me no proofs of the guilt of his foe, though such, I know, were placed in his hands."

"I meant not to express suspicion of this holy person's virtue. But as good and wise men have often been deceived by conspiring circumstances, I would even now venture to hope that you may yet find cause to think Clifford less abandoned than he has lately appeared."

"Impossible! This very day has produced distressing evidence of his guilt, which had not previously reached me, and which, had it been possible for mercy to conceal it, would have been consigned to oblivion."

"Indeed!"

"I speak the truth; and sad I am at heart to own such knowledge of one whom I loved, and respecting whom I promised a dying sister that I ever would regard him as my own. But this good man—"

"I pray, my lord," interrupted the abbot, "let me not be named in terms of unmerited praise. Merely to abstain from crime is not virtue. Far from deserving to be lauded, I have failed in my duty. The Divine Author of our religion enjoined his followers to render good for evil. I have not done this, but have simply avoided returning evil for evil."

The earnestness of the abbot's manner, and the humility of his speech, were happily in unison with the character which Lord Erpingham had given of him, and Edmund felt the unfavourable sentiments which he had been led to entertain already diminished.

"I will not offend your modesty again," said Lord Erpingham. "The narrative which I must recount will sufficiently honour you, without praise of mine. But the tale must be told to Edmund, for it much imports him to know what has chanced. Prepare, young man, for disappointment."

"Your words provoke surprise, my lord; but, in truth, I am at present, what I may hereafter explain, in a situation which leaves me small ground for apprehension."

"Thus then, in brief, knowing your ardent character, immediately on your return I sent with all speed a letter to Sir Geoffrey Brandon, requesting him, for that you were arrived, forthwith to repair to London with his fair daughter. I received not that prompt reply which I expected, but to-day my old friend has been with me."

"I am sorry," said Edmund, "that I knew not of his coming. I could have wished to state—"

"Hear me to the end. He came to me this day, and then I found that the delay which I had noted had been occasioned by Father Egbert."

"This I do not understand."

"Anon you will comprehend right well. That which has been my affliction is, alas! the cause of equal affliction to my friend. His daughter, that same Elinor whom you so admired—she, the intended partner of your life, has fallen to shame, and deserted her heart-broken, too indulgent parent."

Lord Erpingham had now reached a point which waked the liveliest attention on the part of Edmund. Though he had previously despaired of altering the resolutions of Ferdinand, the sudden removal of one difficulty suggested a thought that the other might not prove insuperable. A gleam of hope broke in upon him, but it was blended with sincere sorrow for the amiable being (such he had considered Elinor), whose degradation had been thus unexpectedly announced.

"I have since your return," Lord Erpingham resumed, "told you of the passionate love of retirement which had taken possession of the young lady. This now receives a mournful comment. She had been betrayed by that heartless wretch Clifford. She left her father four months ago. He concealed her flight, hoping to recall her to a sense of duty, but eventually he had the affliction to learn that she was associated with the most profligate and depraved of men; and he, fickle and faithless as in all the rest, now treats her, so it is reported, with a degree of cruelty, which, though due to her folly, she merited not from him for whom she had sacrificed her home, her friends, her fame, her all."

"I am sad to hear the tidings; but are they certainly true?"

"They are. I received them from Sir Geoffrey, who spared no pains to inform himself of the situation of his once beloved child."

"I mentioned that I had seen one with Clifford, whom I considered to be his wife. She was young and lovely, but I recognised her not. It is true I saw her but for a few moments, and her dress and situation were such, that—"

"It might not be Elinor that you saw so recently. She has probably been discarded to make way for some other victim. Love changed to loathing,—Clifford even mocked the fair being he had destroyed, by counselling her, before one who carried it to her father, to leave him for ever, and return to those whom she has filled with anguish, and covered with dishonour."

"Verily, this seemeth past belief," said the abbot, "and this is one cause why I would not be the bearer of the tale which I was solicited to unfold."

"It does seem past belief," Edmund repeated after the abbot, whose incredulity filled him with anxiety to atone for the unfavourable thoughts which he had harboured. "I knew him," he continued, "while at school, to be wild and reckless. Deliberate cruelty I never thought a feature in his character."

"But the facts," remarked his lordship, "which have transpired, and which cannot be refuted, proved incontestibly, that there is no crime to the perpetration of which he is not equal. The melancholy tale, it is fit that I should add, Sir Geoffrey solicited this holy father to communicate. He refused to report aught that could make against Clifford, and kept his disgrace from my ears for several days. The injured father was at length compelled, through the virtuous reluctance of the abbot, to speak sad truths of one who had calumniated him, to unburthen his mind to me himself."

"Though I despise the affectation of unnecessary humility," said the abbot, "yet, my lord, again I must complain when you praise me so unworthily. If Clifford sinned against me, has not the law, and yet more, the scorn of all good men, severely punished his offending. It evinces no extraordinary virtue, that I do not pursue a man thus fallen."

These words were uttered with an air of manly sincerity, which satisfied Edmund that he spoke from his heart.

"I admire, holy sir," he said, "the sentiments which you have expressed, while I perfectly concur with what has fallen from his lordship."

"I am, I must confess, gratified to hear you say so. It is a happiness on which I did not calculate. Men who wish to act an upright part, from the dissimulation abroad in the world, are liable to be often mistaken. Blessed is he who feels that his heart can bear the all-searching glance of HIM, from whom no secrets may be concealed; but he who, enjoying this solace, has also the felicity to stand well with his fellows, enjoys comfort which is reserved for few."

The devotion, the candour, the sensibility evinced by the abbot, all combined to make a deep impression on Edmund. He was reluctant to consider Clifford the villain he was described to be, but he could not question the piety of the monk. He disdained that servile complaisance which would take up the opinion of Lord Erpingham, because it was the opinion of Lord Erpingham; but when he calmly reviewed the facts which had been stated to him, it certainly seemed more probable, that a guilty man would lay claim to innocence, as Clifford had done, than that a man, so esteemed, so saint-like as Egbert was, should be the callous perjured monster Clifford had described him to be.

This reasoning came over his mind with increasing force, till, at last, it became perfectly irresistible. The solemn energy of Clifford was not forgotten; but then he recalled the churlish sternness with which he had spoken to the female his companion, his own admissions, and the shame and confusion with which he had retired from one who knew the whole story of his crime. In fine, Edmund could no longer doubt, that Lord Erpingham had come to a just conclusion. This he stated when the abbot had retired, and the unhesitating manner in which his lordship vouched for its correctness, the description which he gave of Father Egbert's exemplary life, and the details furnished of the evidence which had established the charge preferred against Clifford, all tended to fortify the opinion which he had formed.

On his own account, he did not share the regret of the peer for the fall of Elinor. It supplied a new motive for endeavouring to prevail on Ferdinand to consent to further

delay; and the moment he could break from Lord Erpingham, he hastened to prefer a request that Mariana might not yet be passed to a convent.

He found Ferdinand alone and in tears. His accustomed firmness was no more, and even in the presence of Edmund, though he attempted to conceal, he could not dissipate the weakness which had come over him. On being questioned as to the cause, he replied in a tremulous voice,

"It is over.—The pang of separation was a severe one—but it is past."

"Of what do you speak?"

"Of my separation from Mariana."

"Have you parted from her so soon?"

"I have—I have. We shall meet no more in this life, and for the next, no matter—I must not think of it—yet I cannot but fear that our separation is eternal."

"Your words fill my heart with affliction, but it seems most strange that feeling thus, you act as you have done."

"Press me not on this point.—I am the sport of Fate. Denied to act as I could wish, a destructive torrent carries me away, and that it must prove destructive is my best consolation."

"You labour under a delusion. Your mind is diseased, and has conjured up some hideous phantom to destroy your peace."

"Would it were a phantom?"

"Mariana cannot yet have pronounced the irrevocable vow. I pray you make some pause. Trust me, I have more potent reasons than ever for asking this. At all events, before she bids a final adieu to the world, let her partake with you of the hospitality of Lord Erpingham."

"Lord Erpingham," said Ferdinand, suddenly resuming his accustomed firmness, "shall never gaze upon——" He paused, and his eye glanced at Edmund as if to ascertain whether what he was about to say had been anticipated. He added sternly, but with calmness, "he shall not gaze upon Mariana."

"When you shall know the person of whom you speak, I indulge the persuasion that your ideas will be different. That in some cases you will do well to prevent Mariana from being looked upon by the great and opulent, I admit; but Lord Erpingham was never one of those who could meanly abuse the advantages of his station."

"Was he not?" Ferdinand inquired, with a most significant eagerness.

"I speak not the language of partial affection, but that of truth. When you know him, you will reverence his virtues."

"I hope not."

"Why so?"

"Because it would make the discharge of my duty more painful."

"I understand you not?"

Ferdinand looked round in confusion, like one just awakened from a dream.

"What have I said?" he demanded.

"You have said that the virtues of Lord Erpingham would make the discharge of your duty towards him more painful than it would otherwise be. Can you seriously mean to say you would prefer being connected with one of an opposite character?"

"O! no; such was not my thought. But no more of this. Probe no further, I beseech you, the wound you cannot heal. Heed not the incoherent expressions which may have fallen from me. Take me to Fickett's-fields when you will," he added, with an air of alacrity, "for trust me, I live but to do my duty by Lord Erpingham."

CHAPTER XI.

I see them sit, they linger yet;
Avengers of their native land,
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.

GRAY.

No obstacle appeared now to lie in the way of the execution of that design which Edmund had formed. The pious calm Egbert enjoyed, and which, from the proofs every passing day afforded of his charity and virtue, Edmund had reason to suppose was bestowed by an approving conscience; seeking and finding happiness in the performance of duty, to him appeared most enviable. The engagements into which Lord Erpingham had entered were completely set aside.

Though in the instrument by which Edmund was *sold*, two sisters had been named, as the choice originally held out to him could no longer be offered, the bargain could not stand, and indeed Sir Geoffrey was too much humbled by the conduct of Elinor to think more of claiming Lord Erpingham's alliance. Edmund therefore had only to obtain the consent and approbation of his lordship, before he devoted himself to a monastic life.

Ferdinand was introduced to Lord Erpingham, who soon found that his talents and acquirements had been anything but overrated. His perfect acquaintance with the Spanish was of great use, but his knowledge of America and the native languages gave him still more importance. The ability with which he executed the duties confided to him could not be surpassed; and his undeviating punctuality commanded the esteem of his noble employer.

Edmund witnessed this with satisfaction, but he looked in vain for that gratitude which the conduct of Lord Erpingham might be expected to inspire. Generous and ardent as he had found Ferdinand in other circumstances, Edmund was amazed at what he remarked where Lord Erpingham was concerned. Profoundly tranquil, the relative of Mariana uttered no complaint, but nothing of exultation ever appeared in his manner. Cold and calm, he seemed to court labour; but from the affable friendship, and liberal remuneration with which Lord Erpingham was disposed to requite it, Ferdinand shrunk with invincible repugnance. This conduct Edmund connected with his friend's separation from Mariana, and sometimes a doubt came over his mind as to the relationship between them. He had no reason to suspect that Ferdinand had sought to deceive, but the inward grief which evidently preyed on him Edmund found so similar to what he experienced, that he felt half persuaded the origin of their sorrow was the same, and that Ferdinand, like himself, was a lover.

"You appear sad, my young friend," said Lord Erpingham, one day when they were alone; "is there any thing here disquiets you that it may be in my power to remove?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"If in my arrangements you meet aught that interferes with your comfort, fear not to name it. I dare not promise that the evil will cease, for something may disturb which it

shall be out of my power to reach, but in no case can I hold it an offence that you may direct my attention to the thing which stands between you and comfort."

"You have wisely spoken, my lord; there may be evils which it is not in your power to cure."

"If any one in my household has treated you, for that you are a stranger, disparagingly, my authority shall be promptly exerted to do you right."

"It needs not: here I have not been other than courteously, kindly treated."

"Then must your sorrow have root elsewhere. It should ill become me to pry into that which you desire to conceal; but if the oppressed heart could derive relief from communicating the cause of its affliction to another, let not the relative situations in which we stand forbid disclosure. I do not feel it shame to be the friend of those who are deemed my inferiors, and besides that, I admire your merit, and I am the more drawn towards you from its having been recently, not past an hour ago, reported to me that you first saw the light of heaven in the newly discovered continent."

Ferdinand bent a look of inquiry and surprise at the nobleman, while he asked,

"Have you, my lord? and can that endear any one to *you?*"

"It does. Were it from curiosity alone, I should prize one rich in European knowledge as you are, whom I knew to be a native of that vast theatre for ambition and enterprise."

"And crime," added Ferdinand.

"And crime, as you truly remark. In this I feel as you do; and recalling the frightful enormities which have there been perpetrated, I shudder for the guilt incurred."

"Well may your lordship do so."

"I see," said Lord Erpingham, "that you have a strong sense of the injustice which has degraded the men who might have been the benefactors of a world."

"I have, my lord; and scarcely can I withold my tongue from vain rage and wild execration, while my mind dwells on the awful topic. But an avenging God has seen the horrors which have marked the murderers' track: his wrath pursues them, and even now his hand is stretched forth to visit crime with merited punishment."

"I doubt it not. The Deity, always waking, cannot be baffled by the wicked who persuade themselves that their foolish cunning may avail."

"Most true is your lordship's speech. Just vengeance cannot be defrauded; and he who now enjoys greatness, and seems securely in possession of wealth purchased by blood, may yet come to a bloody end."

"Or if," returned the peer, "that visible retribution should not be exacted on earth, we may still rest assured that it will not pass with impunity."

"But there are cases in which vengeance may not be deferred, till after Nature has claimed the breath of the sinner at the hands of Age. Feeble and defenceless as the Mexicans were found, all the original invaders did not pass to their homes."

"I know it well, Ferdinand. Some of the Spaniards fell by the weapons of the native warriors, while others not so fortunate were taken alive."

"Yes; and the wrathful, but impotent defenders of their land, made sacrifice of them to the god of war. The victims were few, and the masters of their fate sought, by the extremity of pain inflicted on them, to requite all their wrongs. The thought was weak and vain, and the dismal superstition which countenanced it I deplore, not less than the barbarities which demanded punishment."

"You speak as becomes a man born a Mexican, but made by education a Christian."

"Let the forfeited life be taken, where just vengeance exacts it, but not with torture! It is enough that the transgressing spirit is dismissed from the fleshy home which might for a series of years detain it from its account, and hastened to the bar of the Eternal. But my soul abhors the vain fury which could tear open the bosom of the devoted, that the avenger's expecting eye might feast on the last throbs of a dying heart."

"Yet in these savage delights I well remember the Mexicans revelled."

"It was the insane rage of war which madly answered outrage by outrage, and led the untaught invaded, to copy the horrible fierceness of their civilised invaders."

"Humanity must deplore the excesses on both sides."

"True, my lord; but these, the effects of blind rage, I

view as the unavoidable consequences of bringing hostile bodies of men into collision; and hold them to fall short of that depravity, which, deliberately exercising its powers of reasoning, can calmly, sordidly devote to destruction those whom humanity—whom nature—whom God himself enjoins man to protect and cherish."

"I cannot dissent from your theory; but I am not informed of any particular instances connected with the invasion of Mexico which furnish illustration."

"Are you *not*, my lord?" inquired Ferdinand, with an air of surprise.

"Your question," said Lord Erpingham, "is put so emphatically, that it should seem you marvel at my ignorance."

"That of which I speak is so deeply imprinted on my own memory, that I forgot it is not equally well known to those who have not been resident at Zempoalla."

"At Zempoalla, said you?"

"Aye, my lord."

"And came *you* thence?"

"I was born there. But you seem moved: it is you who now question emphatically."

"At some convenient season I may explain why I do so; for the present, it is my object to gain, not to impart information. Suffice it then to say, that I am interested in the fate of certain parties whom you may have known."

"Is it possible! Can your lordship be interested for any one—at Zempoalla?"

"I would know if you have ever heard of a cazique from Mexico, who there abided?"

"His name?"

"Teutila."

"I have seen him."

"Know you where he is now?"

"He is where all must go—he is in his grave."

"Is that certain?"

"I can avouch it, for I was present when he breathed his last."

"What time has since elapsed?"

"Ten years."

"Then the information which I had obtained was true. And yet an after report reached me that he survived. You

were very young at the time to which you refer. Are you sure that you confound not the person of whom I speak with some other cazique, who might die where you chanced to be?"

"I make no mistake. While I live, the death of Teutila can never be confounded in my mind with that of any other mortal born of woman."

"Tell me," said Lord Erpingham, eagerly, "tell me if you know aught of Teutila's grandchildren?"

"I did not know that he had grandchildren."

"Then it cannot be the same."

"There was but one cazique so called. Teutila had one grandchild."

"There were two children."

"He of whom I speak never had but one grandchild, and that one survived him."

"Was it boy or girl?"

"It was a daughter."

"Did you remain long at Zempoalla after Teutila's death?"

"But two months."

"Can you recall to memory how that child, the granddaughter, was bestowed?"

"She was given to the care of an aged relative. Though I made short stay in those parts after Teutila was no more, I was there long enough to see them take leave of Zempoalla."

"Did they intend crossing the sea?"

"They did."

"And whither did they shape their course? Know you not that?"

"That was a secret. When they had withdrawn, no one remained in Zempoalla who knew the object of their departure, or whither they went."

"And have you since by no chance heard of their journeyings?"

Ferdinand replied evasively, with some hesitation: "Since that period, my lord, I have passed my days in Europe, and have had no opportunities of seeing those by whom Teutila was formerly known."

Lord Erpingham turned from Ferdinand with a hurried but faltering step; Ferdinand looked on him with unmoved composure, but he felt somewhat curious to know the cause

of the emotion he remarked, from Lord Erpingham's own lips. The peer had seated himself, and covered the upper part of his face with one hand, when Ferdinand approached him, and with a view of inducing explanation, remarked on his apparent disorder,

"You seem disturbed, my lord?"

"It is all in vain," Lord Erpingham exclaimed. "Could the days that are passed be recalled, without withdrawing from us the knowledge which their lapse has bestowed, we might shape our course better."

"This, my lord, (I say it not to flatter *you*,) is felt by the best and wisest of the sons of men. But happy is he who merely finds, like your lordship, that with superior means he might have passed more happily through life. How different must the feelings of such a man be, from those of the wretch, who, devoted to selfish pleasures, can recal, as he approaches the grave, but the memory of those whom he blasted with his pretended love, whose child owes him but scorn, and who finds, at that advanced period of life when penitence can little avail, since time has taken from him the power to sin, that rank cannot save him from the attacks of conscience, nor affluence purchase for his troubled spirit even a brief respite from remorse."

Lord Erpingham had recovered his wonted serenity; he replied,

"You speak feelingly, with perfect truth and correct reasoning. I can conceive no situation in which a human being would be more deplorable, than that which you describe."

"Methinks there is one, my lord," Ferdinand rejoined. "It is that of the indurated monster who can review such conduct without being deeply, and not only deeply, but permanently afflicted by the recollection. We see the perfection of the dreadful, while regarding an outcast from salvation whose heart can repose, because many unrepenting years made him familiar with guilt, and repeated crimes subdued natural sensibility, till he has become callous to shame, and dead to all feeling."

Ferdinand looked stedfastly on Lord Erpingham while he spoke. The peer assented to the justice of his remarks; but other matters demanded his attention, and their conversation was not continued.

CHAPTER XII.

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design,
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
To bear and not repine.

BURNS.

WHEN Lord Erpingham learned the resolution of Edmund, it afforded him infinite surprise. At first he regarded it as the offspring of a momentary passion, which would soon be forgotten with the resolution itself, and he could hardly think of entertaining it seriously. But when he found that his young friend had calmly, and on reflection, made up his mind to pass the remainder of his days in a monastery, he endeavoured to make him acquainted with all those circumstances, which he considered likely to be found irksome to one of his years. He did not very strenuously oppose the project; for he admitted that his own life would have passed away more happily had he come to a similar determination in his youth. Not considering himself to be fully qualified to advise on this subject, he insisted on his consulting Father Egbert, whose wise and disinterested counsel he was satisfied might be relied on with perfect confidence, and for this purpose he accompanied Edmund to the establishment over which that sanctified personage presided.

It was to the monastery of Leadenhall, standing on part of the site of the market which now bears that name, that they repaired. Though the reforming, or to use a more appropriate and intelligible expression, the rapacious hand of King Henry, had already made free with the funds of divers religious establishments, the house of the *priests of the Trinity* at Leadenhall continued to flourish unmolested by power, and enjoyed so high a reputation on account of the exemplary character of its inhabitants, that no one who visited the market for grain which then existed, could anticipate that the hymn which ushered in the morning, the solemn strains accompanying the celebration of high mass, and the "even song" then daily heard on that spot, would, even in the lapse of ages, be compelled to give way to the clamorous cries of "What d'ye buy?—What d'ye buy?" with which it now resounds.

Admitted to the apartment of the abbot, Lord Erpingham with little delay acquainted him with the cause of their visit. Egbert's surprise was so extreme, that for some moments it actually bereft him of speech, and he gazed on each of them alternately in silent wonder, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"I see," said Lord Erpingham, "you marvel much at the occasion of our coming hither; but thus the matter stands. The youth before you had fixed his affections on a fair maiden. He had reason to hope that she might be his wife; but by untoward circumstances she has been withdrawn from him."

"By death?" inquired the abbot.

"Not by death. She lives, but he may think of her no more; and for the grief which this causes to prey upon his mind, he believes the world can afford no consolation but that which a religious life may supply. He would at once enter a monastery, but this would I in no wise permit, till he had taken counsel from your wisdom and experience."

"I could rejoice," Egbert replied, "in the prospect thus held out to me of winning from the world a soul to God, but that I fear the grief which now oppresses him being abated, his heart will awake to desire the gilded vanities of life."

"Never," said Edmund; "though left to roam at large, and gaze on all the allurements that could be set forth to wake a taste for sensual pleasure."

"This you can easily imagine, under the pressure of the moment; but when time hath soothed your sorrow, then do I fear the worldly spirit within a frame so youthful, will delight to recal the visions in which it formerly delighted."

"Fear me not, holy sir. Secluded from the world as I shall be, what is there within the walls of a monastery that can recal the past? Trust me, I hope in time to attain the happy elevation of soul which lifts you above the low desires that agitate others. You will not deny that you enjoy exemption from these, the most appalling infirmities of our nature; and I dare flatter myself, that you will not disdain to instruct me how to imitate the virtue I admire."

Egbert looked on the young man for some moments. He shook his head, as contemplating with pain the difficult task which he desired to impose upon himself, and answered, in the mild accents of paternal admonition,

"It is true, that I—most humbly I thank him who willed

that it should be so—have so far triumphed over my natural weakness, that I have ceased to crave those earthly gratifications which many seek at risk of their salvation. But I will not disguise from you, that the struggle was long and painful, which my soul had to sustain against the tempter. In vain did I bend in prayer—in vain did I look on the symbol of mercy—nay, in vain did I touch the very wood of the true cross from Calvary: my rebellious thoughts still roamed from the objects on which they ought to have rested, to unhallowed themes of contemplation."

There was a touching earnestness in the manner of the ecclesiastic, which proved that he could feel for the weakness he described, however remote it might be from his own bosom.

After a pause, which neither of his visitors attempted to interrupt, Egbert resumed,

"So it hath been with me; and nothing to conceal from friends so dear, though shame and remorse must attend the confession, I will acknowledge that my mind was thus disturbed even on sacred ground, and while at the head of a fraternity who looked up to me for example. Thus did I feel beneath the consecrated roof of the monastery of Mount Sinai, and even while these eyes were fixed on awful Horeb, whence God vouchsafed to be seen by mortal man, when descending to earth he gave the law to Moses."

The solemn tone in which he spoke inspired religious awe. Lord Erpingham and Edmund listened with interest and with reverence, but were silent.

"I believe you are sincere," Egbert went on, "in what you now profess, but you imperfectly comprehend the course of life which you must lead in a monastery, if your present wishes were attended to, and you once became a member of this fraternity."

"Easily can I comprehend that I have much to learn, but of the general character of the duties and observances which will be required of me, I think I am not wholly ignorant."

"But imagination is a cheat, which decks every object with colours not of right belonging to it. How often do we revel in scenes of cloudless happiness, which we flatter ourselves we shall not fail to realise, when some wished for period arrives:—it comes, and all is storms and darkness, anguish and despair. Your fancy has now been at work on a monastic life, and you image to yourself a state of calm

repose, of unruffled serenity, in which life may sweetly glide away, bright and tranquil as the meandering brook which you have sometimes gazed upon in the evening of a summer's day. But if such your expectation, assuredly you will be disappointed. The path to heaven is thorny;—pain must be endured and mortifications sustained; such as may give your fortitude severer trial than you would voluntarily endure."

"To avoid such pain is not my object; I no more covet indolent repose than animated pleasure. The duties to which you allude will occupy my mind, and sacred hope, still promising a happier life, make this not comfortless."

"But can you bear the ills of poverty? These form a part of our discipline. Your garments shall be coarse, and oftentimes your meals, in place of the sumptuous banquet to which you are now bidden, shall yield but bread and water. Never may you forth alone. On Wednesday and Saturday you will eat but twice a day; and from Septuagesima till Easter you will eat no flesh at all. Should you quarrel with your brother, you must eat your food for seven days from the bare ground. While at meals you may not converse as you are now wont to do, and when you retire to the dormitory, silence must be observed."

"To all such regulations I would willingly conform."

"If, indeed, your frame of mind be so perfect, I have little more to urge. This only, duty to my Lord and regard for you, compels me to add, if luxury or rest are the objects of your desire, they are not to be sought in a monastery. You must be poor, abstemious and obedient; when you would sleep you shall be required to be waking; when desirous of eating you must fast; and when you would go forth you shall be forcibly detained."

"Such restraint will for me be needless; for being once entered, I shall wish to come out no more."

"I," said Lord Erpingham, "concur with our holy friend in thinking this excess of melancholy must abate, and a time may come when you may think differently."

"If I should wish to go forth at all, it would be to seek your lordship; but as I know it will pleasure you to learn I find all I desire within the walls of my intended retreat, it is my purpose to wean myself so wholly from the wish of seeing the world, that even for such a purpose I will not forth, but shall rest satisfied with hearing that your charity

continues to bless the friendless till—I cannot wish the day may be other than distant—you shall be called to heaven."

"Resolved as you are," said Lord Erpingham, "I will not seek to make you regret that you have come to a determination which it is not in my power to change. But I would still suggest that you may do well to consider of those restrictions and privations to which, if you devote yourself to a religious life, you must submit."

"Heed them not, my lord. If ever they give me pain, I am sure it will only rise from the reflection that similar hardships must be endured by one less capable of bearing them than I am. If the pains to be sustained are sharp, I shall partake of the consolations of those who willingly bear them now."

"Questionless, you will," said Egbert, "and you err not in supposing that they are great. It will be your happy lot to claim a share in all the good actions which have been performed by the brotherhood. You will receive the kiss of peace, which it is mine on divers occasions to bestow on the fraternity; and when the host is carried to the sick, you in your turn shall enjoy the distinction of bearing the sponge filled with holy water, which it is meet and fitting should be used on such occasions."

The abbot looked while he spoke, as if he anticipated some exclamation of rapture from Edmund, at learning that he was to participate in advantages so important. In this he was not gratified, for the grief which induced Edmund to act as he did, made him insensible to any distinction that it might be the object of ordinary devotion, ecclesiastical ambition, to gain. Egbert made no remark on his apathy, but proceeded to mention other boons which he might possibly receive. If denied to dance, "save at Christmas and other honest times of recreation," he was informed, that he should be allowed to assist in the representation of those sacred mysteries, which were annually performed. Though the youngest brother in the first year was generally required to be the representative of *Satan*, Egbert announced to Edmund that he thought this might be avoided. At all events he promised to use his best exertions, to save him from the *devil*. It would be unreasonable to expect that he could become at once the representative of *Father*,

Son, or *Holy Ghost*; but he assured Lord Erpingham that he had reason to believe he could prevail upon the brothers to agree that Edmund should be one of the *angels*. He stated with much exultation that the monastery was rich in what would now be called "theatrical properties," inasmuch as it boasted the possession of four *chevelures*, or perukes, to be worn by as many *cherubim*, besides *halo*, and *white* and *flaxen beards*, for the first and second persons of the Trinity. Moreover, they had dyed cloths strained on timber representing *heaven*, and an elegantly painted *wooden tomb*, which was used when they acted at Easter "The Resurrection of Christ." "Here," said he, addressing himself to Lord Erpingham, as if resolved at once to dispel all regret for the loss of his young friend, "here shall Edmund be placed, if my voice may be at all attended to. It shall then be his important duty, when the *Holy Virgin* and *Mary Magdalen* knock without the tomb, to demand from within "Whom seek ye?" and, when they, as is the manner, after the language of the Gospel, give answer '*We seek Jesus of Nazareth*, it will be for Edmund, all attired in *white*, and wearing one of the chevelures which I before mentioned, to reply, '*He whom you seek is not here.*'"

The advantages thus held out did not particularly exhilarate Edmund; but, farcical as they now appear, Lord Erpingham, who with all his virtues and discernment owned a strong attachment to, and veneration for, the ancient usages of the church, considered them, if not of the first importance, as not at all to be derided.

CHAPTER XIII.

Nothyng is to man so dere
As womanys love yn gode manere.

ROBERT DE BRUNNE.

It has already been hinted, that if the abbot calculated on making a monastery more agreeable to Edmund than it would otherwise have seemed, by describing the histrionic glory which might await him, he did not greatly succeed.

To be dressed to represent an angel, and even to act the important part in the tomb of which Egbert had spoken, were matters of no importance in his estimation. He indeed regarded them with somewhat of distaste, and would have been rather pleased than otherwise to have learned that such exhibitions were not considered useful or necessary. But his purpose remained the same, and Lord Erpingham no longer opposed his resolution to join the priests of the Trinity of Leadenhall. The piety and intelligence of the abbot commanded his admiration, and the charity with which he always spoke of Clifford when he had occasion to mention him, proved what indeed seemed completely established by other circumstances, that Egbert had been calumniated. Edmund felt much satisfaction at the idea of putting himself under the government of the holy father, whom he had formerly viewed from credulity, which he now regarded as culpable, with distrust.

However creditable to the brotherhood the acquisition of Edmund might prove, Egbert was sufficiently disinterested to call upon him in the strongest manner to reconsider his resolution. To do this, Edmund declared was utterly useless, and he therefore desired at once to take the irrevocable vow. But the abbot refused to comply with his request, and insisted on his going through the usual period of probation. Edmund was forced to yield; but he declared that from the moment of entering the house, he should consider that he parted from the world for ever.

Ferdinand witnessed with unaffected sorrow the sacrifice which Edmund was about to make. He viewed it as the tenderest mark of affection which a lover could offer to the memory of the mistress of his affections, but he laboured earnestly to dissuade his friend from carrying his resolution into effect. He represented to him, that he need not despair of meeting with brighter beauties under happier circumstances—under circumstances which could present no bar to their union with him; and he conjured him not to waste those energies in a monastery which might, with his prospects, be called into action for the benefit of his country. But never did Ferdinand, while anxious to move him from his purpose, drop one word that could awake the slightest hope in the bosom of Edmund, that if he did so, the fate of Mariana might be changed. Of her he spoke

not; a sigh would sometimes escape him when he heard her name, but it was invariably his object to regard her as one that was no more of the world.

Edmund became a probationer in the house of the priests of the Trinity. He was received with little form, but with much cordiality. Egbert preached a sermon on the occasion, in which he again set forth the importance of maturely considering the nature of a religious life, before a novice decided to embrace it. He at the same time dwelt most emphatically on the impossibility of allowing him, who had once been admitted, to recal his vow. The conduct of the church he likened in this instance to that of a father having a sick son, who could only be cured by the knife and cautery. To sustain this operation, the son consented to be bound; but when he felt the pain, he began to rave and would fain be let loose. This the parent would in no wise permit. And so his sermon continued, "Holy church, having once taken the soul into its care, will not suffer the weakness of the body to risk its perdition. It is most strictly enjoined, that those who become members of this sacred flock, shall not be suffered to stray from the fold. As a man carries a candle, guarding it with both hands that it shall not be blown out, so must those who govern a monastery encompass the unsteady brother, that his spiritual light shall not be extinguished. Seeing that the step once taken may not be corrected, fitting it is, that time should be allowed, that it be not ventured rashly. A wren there is, the which hath long slender legs, and is named after Saint Martin. This bird, sitting one day in a tree, vain-gloriously exclaimed, 'Little should it matter to me though the heavens fall, since I with my strong legs could support them.' Tumbles an acorn upon his head that same moment, whereupon away darted the foolish boaster, screaming as he flew, 'O St. Martin! St. Martin! save your own poor bird.' There are men who, like unto this foolish bird, think they can bear all that may fall on them, but who sorely repent them, and are affrighted so soon as pain or the very appearance of suffering approacheth."

Other fables from that collection attributed to Odo de Ceriton, which contributed so largely to enrich the sermons of the middle ages, were used by the monk and turned in the same way, all of which tended to warn the probationer

not to persevere in his design, unless thoroughly satisfied that his constancy could not be shaken. "For he that having once entered, should thereafter desire his enlargement, even like the ass in the fable, who having parted with half of his tail, prayed that it might be again lengthened, should be laughed to scorn."

Edmund entered the monastery. The solemnities in which he was required to take a part offended not the melancholy which had gained possession of his mind. It soothed him to reflect, that though divided from Mariana, it was his to share the duties which were imposed upon her. He had no wish to leave the hallowed walls which enclosed him for a moment; and when Lord Erpingham was brought to him by Egbert, though he welcomed him with affection, he besought the peer not to think him deficient in gratitude or love, when he prayed him not to risk recalling his thoughts to worldly affairs, by repeating the kindly intended visit.

"Mark you that, my lord," said the abbot, "so pure, so perfect is the holy zeal of this young brother, that he would fain see no more the friend he most esteems on earth, lest such indulgence should carry him back to the vanities which he hath abjured. This saint-like piety your lordship will know how to revere, nor will you think it any disparagement that he places you not on a level with that Being to whom he is wholly devoted."

The praise thus bestowed in presence of Lord Erpingham, Egbert often repeated before the rest of the fraternity. They treated Edmund with respect and kindness, but one of them seemed more attentive, though not more respectful than the rest. Brother Nicholas often looked on him with a steadfastness which attracted his notice; but if Edmund spoke to him at those seasons when conversation was not prohibited, he gave the shortest possible answer, or none at all. Edmund considered this a mark of contempt, and was quite satisfied that he had come to a right conclusion, when one day, after the abbot had warmly eulogised the piety of the probationer, he saw this brother turn his head aside, and perceived him to be convulsed with laughter.

He endeavoured to suppress that indignation which derision usually inspires, and he was not slow in reflecting, that he ought to be more than consoled for any slight which

he might meet with from one of the brotherhood, by the marked attention of their principal. Egbert he considered a pattern of devotion, as well as of humility. Though strict in causing the rules of the house to be observed, there was no austerity in his manner. In the refectory, he commonly went round with drink to the monks, and meekly kissed the hands of each. On particular days, he performed the office of washing their feet, and this was done with as much self-abasement, as if, instead of being their superior, he had been their hired and menial servant. A tear of admiration sometimes started in the eye of Edmund while he remarked such condescension. "This," thought he, "is indeed a worthy servant of the Christian church, for he is really meek and lowly in spirit."

But of his vigilance and resolution, to guard against those under his care suffering their thoughts to rove to that world which they had avowed it to be their determination to renounce, Edmund soon had a proof which was more decisive than agreeable. Indulged with pen, ink, and paper, when the devotions of the day had concluded, he had on one night remained waking in his cell, (he had been favoured with one to himself), and suffered those feelings which grew out of his peculiar situation to escape from him in the following lines:

Auaunt ye flattering dreames of dayes agone,
Whiche by sadde variaunce haue begat my wo,
Sithence poore wyght! a fayre I looked on,
I in my new condicion must forego.
Nathless her deynty beautie doth enthrall,
Bee all my euill gouernaunce forgeven!
That face and eke that persoune I recall,
Togyder with that lippe and smile from heaven.

Ah why! interrogateth my lorne soule,
Did I one of soche gode manere descry,
Wakenyng desires whiche I can none controule,
To loke for blisse and fynde sharp agonie?
Most sadde! but through this murkinesse hope craves
To tell that our hearts twaine released from stryfe.
Shall everych rising from the silent grave
Proue mighty love fails not with loss of lyfe.

The feelings of Edmund will perhaps be more intelligibly rendered by a modern imitation of the foregoing stanzas:

Away ye dreams of other days,
The fruitful source of fond regret,
While yet on features I might gaze
It now were virtue to forget.
But still those beauties will enthrall,
And still, O be the sin forgiven!
That face, that form I must recal,
That lip of love, that look of heaven.

Ah why! the restless mind inquires,
Did such perfection meet my eye,
To wake vain wishes, wild desires,
Then thrill with keenest agony?
But piercing through a convent's gloom,
Hope whispers, when reclaimed our breath,
Two faithful hearts beyond the tomb
Shall hail love victor over death.

The monastery bell had just struck one when the door of Edmund's cell was opened, and Father Egbert entered.

"Much do I marvel, son, to find you waking at this late hour," he said, as he advanced; "you are too ardent in the race of piety, methinks, long to continue in this course Take heed that you fail not. I do not wish to see this overstrained exertion. A man, however he may covet to appear tall of stature, cannot walk on tip-toe all his life, and better it is, in my judgment, not to aim at too much, than suddenly to fail in what has been attempted."

The tone of remonstrance which the abbot used was new to Edmund, and he felt embarrassed how to answer.

"What may this be!" exclaimed Egbert, taking up the paper on which Edmund had been writing. No answer was made, and he proceeded to read it.

Having perused the verses, an air of disappointment sat on his features, but he spoke with his accustomed kindness.

"Youth, I have admonished thee against perseverance in a rashly formed resolution, for great indeed is his sin, who, professing to offer all his heart to God, still suffers his thoughts to rest on the toys and gew-gaws of the world. It is not even now too late to retrace thy steps. Do it, young man, and trifle not by undertaking to offer thy undivided heart to the Creator, while it breathes vows of love and adoration in honour of a mortal."

"Forgive me, holy sir; but it was my hope, that in merely expressing a wish that my spirit might again meet with

that of a being once beloved in a better world, I sinned not against those rules to the observance of which I stand pledged."

"And can you imagine that a love-ditty, tending to awaken a thirst for sensual delights, which all here must study to quench for ever, would well accord with those holy exercises which occupy our days. Even now, I come to summon you to the performance of a solemn duty. Brother Richard, who last night expired, has just been discovered to have had wealth concealed about his couch, of which he never gave account; wherefore, that law which dooms the offender's corpse to flagellation, is forthwith to be enforced. Think you that amorous strains in praise of beauteous eyes and lips, ought to fill his imagination, who is called on to assist in the castigation of a deceased culprit."

Edmund shrunk with disgust and horror from the ceremony thus announced. He replied—

"I crave your forgiveness; but if it must be, I would gladly stand excused from attendance on this occasion."

"It little surpriseth me that the contemplation of the charms of beauty, should be more agreeable to a young mind than the execution of a solemn duty on the loathsome remains of a deceased sinner. But it is not for me to indulge such fancies within these walls. Harsh though it may seem, I hesitate not to say this night you must perform the irksome task of scourging the dead body. It is but one of many painful offices which attach to the life of a member of this fraternity. To morrow, if so minded, you will be free to depart; but while you continue here, it would be reproach to me if I suffered friendship to interpose between you and that which, in your present character, ought by you to be done."

He spoke mildly but peremptorily, at the same time making a sign for Edmund to follow him. The latter saw that there was no alternative, and reluctantly complied.

The abbot conducted him through the corridor to the refectory, and thence by a narrow passage through which Edmund had never been before. Here several of the brothers were assembled, a torch being borne by every third monk. They descended to a vault beneath, and, stretched on a low bier by the side of the grave in which it was presently to be deposited, lay extended the body. The face

was towards the ground—the lower part was covered with sackcloth. Edmund turned his head in disgust from the abhorrent spectacle, but was called upon to act the part assigned to him. A whip had been placed in his hand, and he found that Nicholas was to be his colleague on this occasion. The ill opinion he had formed of that man was not diminished by the readiness with which he appeared to enter upon the performance of the task. The probationer strove to reason down the loathings which oppressed him, by reflecting that the infliction of stripes could give no pain to the dead, and he advanced to the body to fulfil his task. He raised his hand to strike, but when he again saw the lifeless monk, and perceived the livid flesh already marked by the whip of Nicholas, his resolution left him—the instrument of punishment fell from his grasp, and he burst through the circle which encompassed him, with an exertion of strength which no one offered to oppose—which no single member of the fraternity could have opposed with effect.

Egbert, considering that enough had been done to intitate the new member, so far as rites of this description were concerned, suffered another to take up the whip which Edmund was to have wielded, and the flagellation was completed without further aid being demanded from him. The body being then committed to the earth, a solemn requiem was sung for the soul of the departed, whose guilt, it was presumed, had been expiated by the flogging sustained by the body to which it had belonged, and the brethren were dismissed to repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

A man must think of all the villanies
He knows in all men, to decypher thee,
That art the centre to impiety.
CHAPMAN.

On the following day the abbot resumed all his wonted kindness towards Edmund. He expressed regret at the violence which had been done to his feelings at the funeral of the departed brother, but thus he considered it to be his

duty to act, more especially as it was free for Edmund to withdraw himself from the fraternity, and he was anxious that nothing which was painful should remain to be discovered when retreat would be impossible.

Edmund was not only satisfied with this explanation, but grateful for the ingenuous conduct of Father Egbert. Admitting the necessity of strictly adhering to those rules which had served as the foundation of the fame enjoyed by the brotherhood, he thought it would ill become him to complain that they were not deviated from for his accommodation, and he announced it to be his intention to remain an inmate of the monastery.

Hitherto Egbert had exerted himself to display the trials, privations, and sufferings which the members of a religious fraternity must be prepared to endure; but now, finding such representations had made no impression on the probationer, he no longer scrupled to disclose to his view the other side of the picture. He spoke with exultation of the interest in heaven obtained by those who thus withdrew themselves from the temptation of life, and painted in glowing colours the felicity enjoyed, even here, by those who passed their days in devout preparation.

Edmund was no inattentive listener to language like this. The powers which had failed to turn him from a course which he was inclined to follow, were sufficient to induce him to pursue it with increased ardour. He was impatient for the arrival of the hour which would witness the performance of the last solemnity. Egbert ceased to oppose his wishes, and consented to abridge the period first named as the date of his probation.

The conduct of one monk, which had from Edmund's entrance been singular, continued to be so, but in various ways, and in ways which seemed irreconcilably at variance with each other. He looked as if he disdained to exchange a word, declined answering if spoken to, and yet sometimes lingered near Edmund, as if he coveted to be alone with him, or as if it were his especial business to watch his every action. The deportment of Nicholas was so remarkable in this way, on the night before Edmund was to be formally numbered with the fraternity, that he could hardly refrain from calling the attention of the abbot to the circumstance; but reluctance to complain prevailed over displeasure.

Edmund took a final leave of the world. Become a member of the order, bound by a solemn vow to remain faithful to the fraternity while it continued to exist, the first resolve of the new brother was to guard against its reputation being tarnished by any negligence on his part. He rose early, retired late, and distinguished himself by the most rigid observance of all the duties which the brethren thought fitted to occupy them in this life, to prepare them for a better.

But though, from his time being thus filled up, he experienced some relief, nothing could cure the grief caused by the loss of Mariana. His health declined between the united pressure of mental anguish and unwonted bodily fatigue. That gave him little concern, as he had learnt to regard life as an infliction, and its termination as a release from pain.

His weakness continuing to increase, he yielded to the entreaties of the abbot to remain in his cell. From Egbert he received the most marked attention. Could he have tasted them, delicacies till then unknown within those walls would have been at his command. Such he declined; but the kindness of the abbot would not be repressed, and one night he carried to Edmund with his own hands a horn of warm ippocras, which he insisted on leaving, and which he made it his particular request that the sick man should drink. But his kindness was of no avail. Had Edmund been so far inclined to relax in his discipline as to avail himself of the present, it would not have been in his power, for Nicholas, who attended Egbert on this errand, lingered a moment behind, while the abbot hastily retreated to escape the grateful acknowledgments of Edmund, and carelessly, if not wilfully, suffered the ample sleeve of his habit to encounter the horn, which was overturned, and its contents spilt on the floor. A wink, singularly indicative of low cunning, and exultation over mischief, followed this exploit, and Nicholas retired.

Though he wanted not the refreshment which had been set before him, Edmund felt ruffled at the treatment he had received from one whom he had never sought to offend. But he endeavoured to calm the anger which he felt rising in his bosom, by reflecting that it was now his duty to endure with patience. He had succeeded in restoring his mind to a state of tranquillity, and was sinking to sleep, when his

door was suddenly but silently opened, and the individual of whom he had so much reason to complain appeared.

"Methinks," said Edmund, who could no longer help giving expression to his displeasure, "your anxiety to annoy need not keep you waking. If you have any new indignity to offer, at least you might have the forbearance to reserve it till to-morrow, and not intrude upon my solitude at the dead hour of night."

"No time like the present, brother. A child never likes the hour of taking physic; but that must not prevent those about him from giving him the proper dose at a convenient season."

There was a pleasantry in the manner with which this speech was uttered, which seemed to Edmund somewhat out of its place in one devoted to religion.

"Whatever your errand may be," said Edmund; "tell it at once."

"I will, unless by looking on me you can save me that trouble. Have you no recollection of having seen this goodly frontispiece of mine before I came here? Look at me well, and speak."

Amazed at being thus accosted, Edmund stedfastly regarded his unexpected visitor for some moments.

"Your features," said he, "seem familiar; but where I have seen them, I am at a loss to declare."

"Yet it is not long since I made you recal them. But I cannot wonder, that in this place, in this dress, and in the character which I now assume, you should be unable to recognise poor Nick Bray, the fool."

"Can it be possible! Are you indeed the fool?"

"No, I must not say that. You know the rules of our order enjoin humility, and being reduced to what I am, I must not now pretend to the dignity of a fool. Reputation depends upon accident and fashion. Nothing will now go down but Will Somers's jokes. Though at one time I flattered myself I might say and do as many ridiculous things as he could, the prejudice at last so ran in his favour, that nothing I could accomplish was thought tolerably absurd."

"But by what means did you get introduced to this brotherhood?"

"The tale is somewhat long, and I doubt if time will serve for the telling of it. Not to enter into details—after

the death of my poor old master, the cardinal, my fooleries dwindled in importance. From being the jester of the lord, I descended to become that of the knight and the squire, and going lower and lower, I was at last forced to take place at the stews. Even there I failed; and so, not having wit enough to get my living as a fool, I was constrained to turn something else. I was accordingly humble enough to try what I could do in the way of common sense. When I saw you at Canterbury, I had just engaged myself as serving-man to a nobleman; but shortly after I met with our worthy abbot, and he prevailed on me to become a monk."

"He knew not of your former profession, I conclude."

"Trust me, he did. He knew me not in my glory, but after I got to Southwark."

"To Southwark!"

"Aye, to Southwark; have you so soon forgotten that I told you I had been jester at the stews?"

"No, I have not forgotten it, and hence my surprise. Mean you to say that Egbert knew you there?"

"It is even so."

Edmund started with emotion. The tale of Clifford's woes came to his recollection, with the melancholy persuasion that they were unmerited, and that Egbert, whom he had been brought to regard as little less than a saint, was a monster.

"What you have stated," he said to the jester, "fills me with astonishment and horror. Let me not mistake. You say he knew you there. Did *he* ever go to that scene of iniquity?"

"He did. To my knowledge, nights which he has given out were passed in prayer by the sick and the dying, were wasted there in lewd society."

"Then what Clifford told of him was true."

"Most veritable."

"But, knowing this, why did you not step forward and make known what you have seen, to save that ill-fated young man from the ignominious punishment to which he was doomed?"

"Of what avail would the testimony of a low profligate, a servant at the stews, have been, opposed to the oaths of the pious liars who swore to Egbert's being in another place, at the time Clifford and I knew him to have been in Southwark?"

"It might have had some weight."

"Impossible. Had twenty witnesses, circumstanced like myself, appeared, speaking to nothing but the truth, they would have been thought united in an infamous conspiracy. The parties would have exposed themselves to danger, and might even have brought on Clifford additional punishment."

"That, methinks, could not be."

"With all submission to you, master Edmund, seeing you are a gentleman born, a difference of opinion may exist on that subject. Though there is something ungenteel and awkward connected with standing in a pillory, and though it must hurt a man's feelings to have his ears cropped, yet all this is preferable to hanging. Master Clifford himself, I believe, would tell you this, if you ask the question the next time you take a stoup of ale with him in his tent."

"Talk not with levity on such a subject. I am confused —I know not what to say or think. What you have told me seems incredible. Your conduct altogether is a perfect riddle."

"A riddle easily explained. You have wondered at my sullen silence on some occasions. I feared, though my countenance escaped your observation, that my speech might lead to a premature recognition, and I considered it for our mutual interest that we should be regarded as strangers. Egbert did not want you here. In describing the advantages of a religious life, when you consulted him, he (so himself reported,) only touched on such topics as he thought less calculated to accord with your taste, and likely to disgust. It was in persuance of this design that the dead man was flogged. Poor Richard had no money to conceal; he was dealt with but to set you against the austere discipline pretended to be maintained here."

"Pretended to be maintained!"

"Those were my words. The abbot no longer ventures to Southwark, but he has brought the disorders of Southwark here. He was most unwilling to admit you a member of the fraternity, as he feared things might come to your knowledge, which, if they in any way transpired, would furnish our good king with what he has no objection to find, a fair pretence for appropriating to himself the goods and revenues of Leadenhall."

"Might he not have objected to your coming for the same reason?"

"No.—In the first place, he had not so high an opinion of my virtue and piety as he ought to have had, seeing I had been fool to a cardinal; and so he did not suppose that I should be shocked or surprised at meeting with crime in a monastery. Secondly, he knew me to be already in possession of a part of his history, which he did not wish repeated even by one who had been a professed jester, lest by some accident it should obtain credit, and bring others forward who could speak to matters of the same kind; and therefore he judged it better to get me here and stop my mouth."

"By making you a monk?"

"Aye. He told of the easy merry life I should lead here, and I preferred taking this garb to eat and drink in indolence to seeking a livelihood by hardly requited servitude. He has gained his object. I am seldom permitted to leave the house, never—this is the rule of the order—without a companion, which companion is appointed to watch over my words and actions."

"I am shocked!"

"You have reason to be so. I am convinced he desires nothing so much as to get rid of you."

At this moment Edmund recollected the ippocras which had been knocked down by Bray. A suspicion flashed across his mind, and he impatiently inquired—

"Was it therefore that you threw down the horn this evening?"

"It was."

"And can you suppose that the abbot would proceed so far as to attempt my destruction."

"I have not time to tell what I know, so will not dilate on what I only suppose. Thus much I may say, I do not believe that he brought you a potion which would have caused you to be found dead in the morning; but I know that it was intended to make you sleep, and believe that deleterious drugs were used in its preparation, to undermine your health."

"But why should he be anxious for my sleeping this night in particular?"

"Because several of this holy fraternity, who have been

subjected to some restraint by your coming among them, are a little impatient, and taking advantage of your temporary absence, had so carelessly indulged, that they were already inebriated, and much disposed to be noisy, when he so considerately attended you."

"Every word you utter creates new astonishment. I cannot believe the things you tell."

"If you choose to pass along the corridor, and to the door of the apartment communicating with the refectory, which you can do in silence, and without a light, you will be convinced that I have not attempted to deceive. Before I left, the whole party drank, on their knees, "to all the courtezans in the world;" and, if still capable of speech, I will answer for it they are little better occupied at this moment."

"I will do what you suggest," said Edmund: "I will have conviction."

"Go cautiously. In the meantime I will step to the dormitory for a memorandum which I had made, and which it was my intention to put into your hands to-morrow, had I not found an opportunity of speaking with you this night. I will then, unless the party seem on the point of breaking up, tell you more of my thoughts."

Both immediately left the cell. They separated. Edmund approached the door of the room which had been mentioned. It was closed, and the key was in the lock, but through a small crack in one of the pannels, he could perceive that the brethren were not practising that self-denying abstemiousness which they professed, while the loud but indistinct speech of some of the party satisfied him that several, if not all, were in a state of intoxication. He had no wish to learn more, and was softly drawing back when his foot slipped and he stumbled. That moment the door opened, and Egbert demanded, "Who comes there?"

Edmund had sufficient presence of mind to advance towards the door, as if he had intended to enter the apartment in which the brethren were engaged. At the same time he addressed the abbot—

"Forgive, me reverend sir, but the wine which your bounty proffered for the solace of my weakness, has been spilt. I thirst, and would fain obtain a cup of water."

The abbot was much surprised. He, however, placed his form in the door-way, so as to bar all entrance.

"I—I did not expect to see you, my son, this night. I fear you have done wrong to leave your couch. Trust me, I am sorry for the untoward accident which brought you here. But retire—retire without delay, and I will bring you a new supply of ippocras. Retire, I say, straight, for your health may suffer from delay."

Edmund retreated to his cell. He was fearful that Bray would return at the moment when the abbot should be there, but he was spared the embarrassment which such a meeting must have occasioned. Egbert failed not to make good his promise. He brought another cup of spiced wine, a part of which he insisted that Edmund should drink in his presence. He inquired if he could render any further service, and being answered in the negative, withdrew. Edmund remarked that he locked the door on the outside. For some time he waited in expectation of the jester's return, but a drowsiness now came over him which he could not resist. He remembered what Bray had told him of the object of the abbot, but his senses began to wander, and sleep sealed his eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
Why feels my heart its long forgotten beat?

POPE.

UNACCUSTOMED to resist, Mariana entered the convent of St. Helen without a murmur, but not without a tear. It was in vain that Ferdinand called upon her, with the authority of an uncle, to dismiss the grief which he regarded as a weakness. While she gazed for the last time on one who had ever been dear to her, and on whom she had long leaned for support, she experienced affliction which no language can pourtray, and when in addition came those regrets which of themselves were sufficient to depress a spirit less likely to be borne down than that of the gentle Mariana, her heart seemed to sink within her, and the paleness of anticipated death already invaded her cheek.

The nuns expressed the highest satisfaction at gaining

such an addition to their society, and the prioress, though her piercing looks made the novice tremble, spoke in the gentlest accents. Mariana had never known a mother's love. Often had she looked, not with envy, for of that she was incapable, but with deep regret, that she had not been permitted to taste the happiness which she beheld, when it was her fortune to see a young female the object of a fond mother's care. To find herself now treated with maternal kindness by one who in years she supposed to be what her own mother might have been, affected her deeply, and though it could not supply consolation, it failed not to inspire gratitude.

But tenderly as she was treated, Mariana marked in the conduct of the prioress anxiety to instruct her in the duties of a nun without loss of time. In doing this, she was careful not to shock the new comer by harshly announcing the regulations which must be observed. The method which she took was to withdraw Mariana from the rest of the sisterhood, and describe them, while giving the history of the institution, so as to enable her young charge to infer what was expected from every one belonging to the institution.

Wishing to strip precept of its dryness and severity, she connected it with narrative; and while teaching the duty of a nun, she acted as if her main object was to gratify curiosity.

She recounted to Mariana, with glowing exultation, the glorious labours of St. Helena, and told her the empress of that name, under the immediate guidance of heaven, had been so happy as to discover the true cross, a portion of which was then beneath that sacred roof, which portion had all the miraculous virtue of the whole. But, to convey a more lively idea of this incident, she produced the seal of the convent. This was in the form of an eye; on its rim the inscription "*Sigill: Monialum Sancte Elene Londoniarum*" appeared; and within this, the empress Helena was represented sustaining the cross in an erect position, her left arm round the shaft, and the three nails which had sustained the hands and feet of Jesus grasped in her hand. On the opposite side, a group of devout worshippers were pourtrayed, who, with bended knees and uplifted eyes and hands, looked towards the expiatory emblem, for comfort and salvation.

When Mariana's attention had been duly directed towards the objects here depicted, it was next led to the contents of a parchment, to which the seal was appended. These consisted of the regulations which Reginald Kentwode, dean of Saint Paul's, had thought proper to frame for this pious sisterhood, in the year 1439. The articles were many, but the prioress herself took the trouble to select the two which follow, and read them to Mariana.

"That ye, ne noone of youre sustres, use nor haunt any place withinne the priory, thoroghe the wich evil suspeccyone or sclaundere mythe aryse, weche places (for certeyne causes which move us) we wryte not hereinne in our present injunccyon, but woll notyfy to yowr prioresse. Nor have no lokyng nor spectacles owteward thorght the wiche ye mythe falle in worldly dilectacyone."

"That noone of yow speke ne comone with no seculere persone, withoute lycence of the prioresse. And that there be another of yowre sustres present assigned by the prioresse, to here and recorde the honeste of both partyes in such commynication. And such letters or geftes sent or receyed may turn into honeste and wurchepe, and none into velanye ne disclaunder of yowre honeste and religione."

The prioress stated, in explanation of these articles, that in former times great excesses had taken place even within those walls. Improper communications had been exchanged through the grating of the crypt, during the performance of mass; and this had made it necessary that further powers should be given to the superior, as well to maintain the reputation of the convent, as to preserve from Satan the souls of its inmates.

She expressed an apprehension that Mariana would consider the restrictions which the nuns were compelled to observe, too rigid. Mariana assured her, that it would be her care not to transgress them. It was her sincere desire to comply in all things with the will of her uncle. It would have given her satisfaction had he come to a different decision; but assured that what he had done was dictated by the most ardent affection, she felt, though she could not repress melancholy, that to be in any respect disobedient or refractory would be ungrateful.

The prioress applauded the piety of this resolution. She was confident that it would be found to have been inspired by

wisdom; and she assured Mariana, that those restraints, of which in the first instance it was natural for her to stand much in awe, would eventually be found so light as not to be felt in any respect irksome.

The prioress was anxious to prove that the words of kindness addressed to Mariana, on her entrance into the convent, were not uttered as a matter of course, by endeavouring to do what might comfort and pleasure her on every occasion. This conduct compelled her, in answer to a letter which she received through the superior from Ferdinand, to state that she had experienced the kindest attention; but at the same time she scrupled not to add, that her objections to the life of a nun remained unshaken. She entreated him yet to consider, if she might not be released from the necessity of taking the veil, and declared herself not without hope that he would see reason to revoke his decision.

Ferdinand promptly replied. He rejoiced that she was satisfied with the conduct of the prioress and her sister nuns, but thought, however unwelcome the assurance, that it was kindness once for all to state, that she must look for no change in her situation. "I do thank you," he concluded, "for your letter. It hath done merveilles to set my heart at ease, and now, sithence you be thus happily settled, where no engulphing storm can assail, God his name be thanked, I have but little to do on earth, which little shall be soon and easily accomplished. Wherefore I pray ye, Mariana, forget the world and forget me. Past one other letter after this present, you shall not receive, soe I believe and desire. Repine not, weep not at this; for trust me, it will grieve thy gentle spirit to hear *of* me; but still more to hear *from* me again."

Mariana received the letter with hope, but she closed it in despair. There was that in its termination which recalled the terrific confusion into which she had been formerly thrown, by the language of Ferdinand. When she read what he had now written, and recalled his former words and manner, she suspected that he meditated self-destruction. The horror which this idea inspired, she in vain strove to repel. It heightened her former melancholy; and tears, often as it recurred to her, and it was never long absent, fell from her eyes in torrents.

The prioress failed not to remark that Mariana, before

sad, was now disconsolate. She endeavoured to soothe her, but the maternal love which at first, in some degree, mitigated her sorrow, could not reach the present source of her grief. The superior imputed her affliction to the peremptory manner in which the suit of Mariana to be withdrawn from a religious life, had been rejected.

"You weep, daughter," said she, "and trust me your tears affect me. It is my office to reprove them; but I know how keen the pang which nature, rebelling against devotion, inflicts on the young and susceptible mind."

"Indeed, my holy mother—"

"Nay, Mariana, dissemble not with me, it would be useless, and fear no harshness from my lips; you are now as one who has received the veil, so I consider you, for your uncle has written to request that this may take place with all speed, and as privately as possible. Therefore, henceforth regard me as your mother, or, if that would bring me nearer to you, as a sister, to whose love you may reveal the inmost workings of your heart, without dread of exposure, and with prospect of solace greater than, when you first came here, it would have been safe in me to encourage you to expect."

"Alas!" Mariana sighed, "I know not how to make return for kindness so unlooked for; I have sorrows springing perhaps from phantoms of the mind, which I dare not trust to expression."

"I can easily guess the state of your feelings, but fear not me."

"I cannot give utterance to my thoughts, nor can I render up myself entirely to the performance of those duties, which it should now be my joy to fulfil. I feel that I am unworthy of the asylum I have found—of the indulgence which I have known; for while my whole soul should ascend to its Creator, my mind is as it were chained to the earth, and my lips repeat, without consciousness or meaning, those prayers which ought only to be pronounced with the liveliest emotions of piety."

"Heaven does not require impossibilities of its creatures. The youthful being, suddenly snatched from the world, cannot at once forget the brightly-varied scenes which she has beheld; nor can she, while they are fondly remembered, at once discard all wish to revisit them, or to indulge in those associations which they recal."

"Your kindness frames an apology for my weakness, which I should have feared to pronounce for myself."

"Let this be regarded as a cheering omen, that as now in words I go further in your favour than your own speech could venture, I may hereafter indulge in something beyond words."

"You are good, but goodness cannot perform impossibilities. No indulgence can eradictate the cureless grief which inhabits my disturbed bosom."

"I think, my young sister, I can guess at the situation of your heart. I know the agonising tortures which thrill the bosom of the maiden devoted to heaven, but fondly attached to the world. I have felt and can commiserate those emotions, which the deity seems to inspire (so the votary of love feels,) but which duty to that deity commands us to subdue (so holy fathers teach;) you will therefore not be dealt with harshly by me."

Mariana again expressed her acknowledgments for present kindness and promised indulgence.

"But," said the prioress, "there is something in your countenance which tells me, that while you express and desire to manifest gratitude, you feel despair. Be comforted: often in the blackest night, a bright star unexpectedly pours his glistening glory on the eye; and so perhaps, dreary as all within these walls may appear, unlooked-for happiness will yet gladden its pensive inmate."

Mariana was affected by the tender warmth of the superior, and abstained from speaking, that she might not give new pain by declaring how impossible it was, with the griefs and apprehensions which then oppressed her, for her mind to receive the comfort which the prioress desired to impart.

CHAPTER XVI.

Sir, quod I, and where is she now?
Now, quod he, and ystinte anone,
Therwith he wox as dedde as a stone,
And saied, Alas! that I was bore!

CHAUCER.

"It is a goodly sight to see a young man diligent. Such sight refreshes my eyes; but it may be meet to remember

est modus in rebus, and truly I must remark your industry passes that line which, in my judgment, prudence requires should be observed."

Such were the words of Lord Erpingham, addressed to Ferdinand, when, after weeks of toil, his lordship found his secretary occupied with labours which he had never required him to take upon himself.

"Your lordship is kindly considerate; but it has escaped your recollection, that the industry which fatigues the body is often found the best means of giving the mind repose."

"Leave you these cares for a season. The day is passing fair; and as you may find pleasure in viewing the country, a horse is ready saddled, on which you can forth immediately. It will perhaps relieve your spirits, and improve your health, which of late is, so it strikes me, somewhat impaired."

"Of such improvement I have no need. I covet not the proffered indulgence, and cannot enjoy the recreation you would fain afford."

"Nevertheless, it is my desire that the experiment shall be tried. Change of scene will sometimes work wonders on the youthful mind; and it would not a little pleasure me, if it might bring to you that lightness of heart which does not ill become your age. So take your course; and that you may think nothing of charges, disburse the contents of this purse for me."

Ferdinand received the offered purse, at the same time demanding,

"In what way am I to expend this gold? For whom is your bounty intended?"

"To your first question, Ferdinand, I reply, even as you like:—to the second, I must say, talk not of bounty, but consider it an inadequate acknowledgment for the unwearied zeal by which you have distinguished yourself, since you first came beneath this roof."

Ferdinand started with unfeigned surprise at finding the present, which was of no mean value, intended for him.

"I pray you take it back, my lord,"—he faltered: "I have no use for it—I have not—I—I cannot deserve it from *you*, as others may."

"Let your modesty be dumb for this time. Name it not

—nay, nay," continued his lordship, repelling Ferdinand, who endeavoured to return the purse to his hand, "this is too much. If you mean not to offend me by a mark of your contempt, give over resistance."

Ferdinand was irresolute how to act. A deep blush invaded his countenance. Yielding to the kindness of his patron, he said, bowing while he spoke,

"That I may not offend, I will hold it for your lordship."

Lord Erpingham pressed on him the propriety of indulging in the exercise which he had recommended, and with such effect, that Ferdinand ceased to resist, and descending to the yard, he mounted the horse prepared for him, and passed out behind the house in Jackanapes-lane, which then led eastward from Fickett's-fields into Chancery-lane.

But Ferdinand had no desire to view the country. He gazed with the most perfect indifference on scenes which, had his frame of mind been different, might have charmed by their beauty, or surprised by their novelty. Without any particular object in view, he first rode in the direction of Hampstead, and then, with listless disregard, suffering his horse to choose the road, he went eastward. He took little notice of the parts to which he wandered, till he found himself in Finsbury-fields. It was by that time afternoon, and having done enough to satisfy himself that exercise could not benefit him, he traversed the extensive plot of waste and swampy ground on which Finsbury-square, and the streets north and south of it, have been erected, and returned by Moorgate to the city.

He had reached St. Paul's, when he observed a funeral procession enter the cathedral. Ferdinand felt desirous of witnessing a ceremony, likely, from its solemnity, to be congenial with those feelings of melancholy which had possession of his heart. He accordingly passed within the church-yard of Pardon Haw, which stood on the north side of the cathedral, dismounted, and followed the corpse.

There was then a public way through the body of the church, which was very much frequented in the latter part of the day. Those who repaired thither did so, not from feelings of devotion, but to walk and lounge, to talk of politics and business, and plan the pleasures of the night. The pressure was commonly so great in "the walks of Paul's," that but few females ventured there, such excepted whose

object it was to ascertain the dissipated of the other sex. Here patriots who ventured to criticise the measures of the government, a body greatly inferior in numbers to those who in that way now occupy themselves, failed not to repair to catch the current reports of the day. Here the trader hied to meet his mercantile friends; and here came the dandy of the sixteenth century, to exhibit to the admiration, envy, or merriment of the crowd the newest fashions. The entrances and various parts of the walls were covered with numerous placards, describing the wants and wishes of those by whom they were placed there, the commodities they had to sell, or the feats they were competent to perform. That they disfigured a splendid edifice, might have been objected to them, but this was not regarded, and to say the truth, merited not to be regarded as of moment, when set against the important accommodation offered to all classes of the community, by this sort of general *advertiser*. The Royal Exchange had not then been erected, theatrical saloons had not been imagined, the diurnal or hebdomadal press had not been called into existence; and it will therefore excite little surprise that this, or that any place in London, should have been generally in the crowded state, which caused the walks of Paul's to be called "the land's epitome," or "the lesser ile of Great Britaine," which so oddly combined the attractions of an exchange, a playhouse, and a newspaper.

Ferdinand penetrated into the midst of the multitude without intending to do so; the procession which he intended to follow had passed and was no longer seen. After a short delay, he found his way to the choir. The mourners were not there, and he was retiring, when a chorister of the cathedral, sustained by a verger, detained him by demanding money.

The peremptory tone in which this demand was made, ill accorded with the sacred character of the place, and Ferdinand felt his indignation moved by the manner in which he had been accosted.

"What mean you, sir," he inquired, "that you thus rudely claim money of me for entering a place of worship, which of right is open to all."

"Speech is thriftless, my master, here," replied the chorister: "methought even one of the common sort, such as you may be peradventure, could hardly remain so clownish

as not to know that coming here in such guise as you come, he must pay *spur money*."

"My spurs," said Ferdinand, "are no accommodation to myself at this present; but I see not what incommodity they can bring to you, that you should feel emboldened so coarsely to extort pay."

"Perhaps you deem that you have shown much forbearance in *only* bringing your spurs, and looked for gratitude from us of the church, forasmuch as you have spared us as yet the company of your horse."

"I say not that; but this I shall adventure to hint, that, but for your surplice, I should have requited your flouts, that you should, ere this, have felt you owed me no thanks for coming without my whip."

While he spoke, a motion of his arm displayed the instrument of which he had spoken to such advantage, that the chorister fell back a step or two, as if he anticipated its immediate application to his shoulders. The words of Ferdinand served to dissipate this idea, and backed by several of his fellows, he returned to the attack with increased courage.

"Your flourish," he said, "will not avail to save your pence. If you part not from some of your coin, we shall be in no haste to part from you. Those only refuse to satisfy the ancient demand for *spur money*, who, being masterless men or household vagrant knaves, desire to get a lodging for the night in the oratory, which shall be yours if you scruple more. So pay your coin straight, or the door shall be made fast."

The door by which Ferdinand had entered was already bolted. One of the choristers was hastening towards a second door, which was open, as if to secure it, when another entered in haste, and called out to his fellows,

"Speed ye—speed ye to the grave."

The desire of witnessing the obsequies about to be performed operated more powerfully on Ferdinand than the threats which had been uttered; and as he now judged that by satisfying their cupidity his wish might be gratified, he gave a *tester* (a shilling was then so named), being the first piece on which he chanced, to the choristers, who instantly ran with disorderly laughter out of the choir, towards the place where they were to assist in the solemn rites appointed for the burial of the dead.

Disgusted not less by their indecorous levity than by their rudeness and rapacity, he followed their steps, wondering at the carelessness with which human beings from habit are brought to view the most affecting solemnities. He passed the Gothic shrine of *Saint Erkenwald*, then a splendid object, for the hands of reforming puritans had not despoiled it of the silver, gold, and jewels with which credulous piety had enriched it, to prevail on the saint, for rewards so munificent, to intercede for the liberal donors in heaven; as well as to cure divers maladies which afflicted the faithful on earth. He had little time to examine the monuments of the Saxon kings *Sebba* and *Ethelred*, and he passed in the same hurried manner the tombs of *Henricus de Hengham*, Eustatius Falconberg, *Harry de Lacie* Earl of Lincoln, *Bishop Niger*, *Sir Simon de Burley*, *Bishop Kempe*, *Sir John de Beauchamp*, and John of Gaunt. He halted for a moment to admire the singular beauty of the final resting-place of *Thomas de Eure*. The admirable brass effigies of himself, and the angels and saints placed about his tomb, made it hardly less striking to the beholder than the shrine of the saint. His pause was short, for he was near the grave, and perceived that the service had begun. The body had been lowered in the narrow cell prepared for its reception, and Ferdinand saw the priest take a small spade which was handed to him, and drop earth on the coffin, so as to form a line from the head to the feet. He then threw mould over the bosom of the dead man, in a transverse direction, to form the sign of the cross. This part of the ceremony completed, the shovel was given to an attendant, and a chalice with a small brush in it was handed to the officiating ecclesiastic, who sprinkled with holy water from the chalice the cross which had been described. A pause ensued, and more earth was thrown in by the grave-digger, so as completely to hide the coffin from view. The choristers who had sung when they first reached the grave, chaunted the *antiphon*. Ferdinand listened to the affecting strain with interest, but with astonishment, while he reflected that the sublime harmonies which moved his wonder proceeded from those who had so lately been engaged in a rude and insolent struggle for a trifling donation.

The priest apostrophising the departed, exclaimed, "I commend thy immortal spirit to God, the all-omnipotent,

through the merits of his Christ—ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The last words were unaccompanied by the ceremony connected with them in the modern funeral service, and the mourners retired.

Ferdinand was about to leave the church, when his attention was arrested by the spear, shield, and cap of *John of Gaunt.*

The same taste which placed the garment worn by Edward the Black Prince over his remains at Canterbury, had deposited these relics of his brother in the metropolitan cathedral. Examining them with that minute observation which objects, once the property of any distinguished mortal who flourished in a generation long since passed away, are calculated to invite, he perceived by a neighbouring tomb a man reclining with a melancholy air. His eyes were fixed on the statue of a beautiful woman. The elegance of the figure, and the sweet expression of the countenance, though but imperfectly seen through the dusky gloom which the coming evening had thrown on every object, commanded involuntary admiration. Ferdinand could not but acknowledge the exquisite skill of the sculptor, who, while giving her an air of cheerful resignation as she prepared to obey the summons of beckoning cherubim, had mingled with it an expression of commiseration for one below, who was seen struggling in frantic despair, to detain her on earth. His attention rested alternately on the tomb and on the individual near it, by whom he suddenly found himself recognised. It was Lord Erpingham.

"I thought not of meeting with you," said his lordship, "in this lonely aisle. Rather should I have expected to find you in the thronged walks; for though you seek not dissipated pleasures, there, methinks, you would look on a more agreeable variety than can amuse in this silent receptacle of death."

"Your lordship, it should seem, judged differently for yourself, or you would not have been here to remark on my singularity of taste."

"Interesting associations and affecting recollections bring me here, which cannot exist for you."

"But, my lord, there is enough of interest ever resident with the tombs of departed worth, to give a place of sepulchre no small attraction."

"That there is much to interest cannot be denied. How thrilling the reflection suggested when we recal what the dust on which we stand has been, or when the open grave presents us with the mouldering clods, which were the mighty men of other days."

"Or with the wasted relic, once the monarch's hand, which proud ambition but aspired to kiss."

"But, perhaps, still more touching the contrast," said Lord Erpingham, "when we remember that here too all the potent, the once resistless artillery of love is deposited. Here sleeps, in cold forgetfulness, the eye which could dazzle with its radiance. The ruby lip that woke the admiring lover to rapture, crumbles unregarded, and the gay tresses which sported in wanton luxuriance over a brow of alabaster, lie dishevelled and dishonoured. Here, side by side, reduced to the same level, rests the fair one who flourished in unaided, undecorated beauty, and she who wooed all the arts to which folly can resort to conceal its abence."

"I need not ask to which of these classes she belonged, at whose tomb I saw your tears fall."

"True, Ferdinand, for though the sculptor could but faintly indicate the living grace, the mild intelligence, the beaming love, which belonged to the dear original, enough of her departing brightness is imaged by his chisel, to distinguish her from those who vex their lives with vain studies to adorn themselves, and who, to seem lovely, wear colours not their own, in odious mockery of the roseate glow which mantles on the damask cheek of youth, blooming in happy innocence."

"Indeed, my lord, she seems to have been no common beauty."

"She was,—but oh why, why should I recal it!—a model of perfection. I speak not merely of her form and face, but of her mind. I wish to bow with submissive reverence to the inscrutable decrees of Providence, yet can I not choose but marvel while I mourn, that one so fitted to grace this earth should have been recalled so soon."

His voice faltered, and he slightly stumbled. Ferdinand offered to support him, and doing so he perceived the strongest emotion expressed in the countenance of his patron.

"Thy kind aid I need not," said Lord Erpingham, endeavouring to resume his wonted calmness. "I feel better."

"A burning tear has fallen on my hand. It came from you, my lord."

"It is not the first by millions that I have shed on this spot."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ferdinand.

"This seems to cause you measureless astonishment."

"It does, my lord, to mark a love so fervent and so constant—*in you.*"

"Because you see me a lonely isolated being now, it fills you with amazement to learn that I was ever otherwise."

"I certainly did consider your lordship too prudent to enthrall yourself with those ties which, though some have deemed them sweet, often bring much sorrow."

"True; but the kindred bond is still so rich in exalted joy, that all else on earth is mean compared with it. This, giddy unreflecting youth can ill comprehend. It is when the wane of life approaches,—when experience has taught the observer to comprehend the intrinsic worthlessness of common pleasure, the vanity of praise, the hollowness of profession, that he understands the solace of being enabled to retreat to a sweetly peopled guileless little world, where he may reign in undisputed sovereignty, as father and as lord."

"Feeling thus, I should have expected that you would not have been as you now are."

"It is because I feel thus that I am what you see me. Prematurely robbed of all I most prized on earth, I mourned too much for lost happiness, to be capable of beginning the world again."

"But you feel too acutely. Ought you not rather to exult in the hope that the beauty here imaged in a monumental marble, awaits your coming in a better world."

"So I trust."

"How vast were the difference if, instead of being able to cherish such belief, it were yours to know that instead of hastening to meet the smiling object of happy love, you must soon be confronted by the bleeding spectre of one betrayed —betrayed to shame and murder. You start, my lord."

"The awful idea you have suggested might make any

mortal start with horror. It is sad for a sufferer to feel himself a

> "Wretche that dethe had made al naked,
> Of all the bliss that 'er was maked,"

as our great poet has described that same John of Gaunt, near whose grave we stand, to have been; but if to agonizing regret conscious guilt were added, I should think the load of woe too great for mortal man to bear."

"I once supposed so too, but I know the contrary?"

"Do you *know* the contrary?"

"At least, my attention has been directed to one who is a living proof that your supposition is unfounded."

"Can it be possible! Is he in England?"

"He is."

"Is he known to me?"

"Your lordship has been where he was to be found."

"His name?"

"It were useless to mention it."

"I grieve that such a wretch should exist."

"And so do I—but the doors of the cathedral are now being closed. We must retire. Your lordship must shake off this show of sadness. There is much cause for grief when we lose those to whom we are fondly attached; yet you must feel that he is comparatively happy who knows the evil to be the result of calamity, and not the consequence of heartless damning crime."

CHAPTER XVII.

> The wanton nunnes likewise dallying with them in the darke, brought forth the fruits of darknesse, as was found in finding many infant's bones in many of their cells.
> SPEED.

THOUGH caution was as necessary as it could have been at any time on the part of Bray, when communicating with Edmund, yet as the latter was no longer likely to attract notice by any sudden exclamation of surprise, opportunities for exchanging their ideas occurred which had not before offered. These were of short duration, but they sufficed to

enable the jester to explain the prudential considerations which had prevented him from returning on the preceding morning, after the abbot had been unexpectedly encountered, and to announce that on the following night, as it would be his turn to perform the ceremony of going round to the cells, to ascertain that all were in, he would visit Edmund, if the corridor should be clear, when they could converse more at leisure.

Edmund had contemplated death, not only without pain, but with feelings of satisfaction and consolation, while he believed that it approached but in the society of devotion and love. He did so no longer when he suspected that he might perish the victim of base assassination. He began to inquire if he had no motive for living—if it became not a duty to defeat the villain who aimed at his life? and he had nearly carried this in the affirmative, on considering the question merely as it affected himself, but when he remembered the wrongs—the cruel injuries which the ill-fated Clifford had sustained, he felt that duty commanded him to preserve his own existence, in order, if possible, to vindicate another's fame. Clifford, it was too probable, had left England in despair, and was now far beyond the reach of reparation, but his name might be snatched from obloquy, and his destroyer brought to justice.

Reflections like these made him not a little anxious for the arrival of the hour when he calculated on receiving a visit from the jester. Nicholas came. He called on Edmund by his name, and received the usual answer, while the door was silently opened for his reception. Bray waved his hand, and declined entering. He vanished. Edmund heard his steps at a distance, and believed that he was prevented from fulfilling his promise. The sounds died away, and the next morning Bray appeared. Having walked some distance from the cell, he returned barefooted, that his approach might not be remarked.

"Well, Master Edmund," said he, "the door being closed, you had little opportunity of watching the motions of the worthy abbot before he surprised you."

"I certainly had but few moments for observation, but they proved that he was different from what I had supposed him to be; and that point settled, I can easily believe that he has sustained no wrong from your description."

"It now only remains for you to decide what course you will take."

"On that subject I have no right to pause. I hold it to be my duty to expose the hypocrite without delay."

"How will you attempt this?"

"My first step shall be to acquaint Lord Erpingham with what I know?"

"But by what means will you do this?"

The jester smiled while he put this question. Edmund thought he was trifling with him by asking it.

"Surely," said he, "you are jesting when you make such inquiry. In speaking with Lord Erpingham, I shall avail myself of the same organ which has hitherto served me, however indifferently, for the purposes of conversation."

"It is a sore calamity, that when a man has once gained the name of a fool, or a wit, or anything of the kind, he cannot easily obtain attention when he speaks the language of sober thoughtfulness. Your tongue, I doubt not, has heretofore served you in very good stead; but I hope you will not suspect me of wishing to resume my abdicated functions, nor yet of meaning to treat your mode of discourse with the slightest disrespect, when I hint that you will find it somewhat difficult, standing here at Bishopsgate, to make yourself well understood by Lord Erpingham at Temple-bar."

"Nay, this is idle."

"Why so?"

"Because Egbert has repeatedly offered to permit me to visit Lord Erpingham. He has even pressed me to go; and though by the rules of the order one of the fraternity must be my companion, that cannot prevent me from disclosing what I wish to reveal."

"Heretofore, while he had no suspicion of you, it would have been an easy matter to gain licence to visit Fickett's fields. It will not be so now."

"How know you that."

"Because I know the man of whom we speak. Though you disguised your object in watching him and his brothers in jollity with some address, depend upon it you have not so far succeeded but he at least suspects you. If you pass from this place, it must be by stealth."

"I think you magnify the difficulty. After pressing me on many occasions to see Lord Erpingham, when I

shall say that feeling indisposed, I will avail myself of his kindness by leaving the monastery for a few hours, still in all things conforming to its rules, what can he offer in opposition to my wish?"

"In argument nothing, but in bar to the execution of your design, sundry bolts and locks, which will defeat all your projects more effectually than the most cogent reasons that ever fell from the lips of man."

"Do you think, then, that he will venture to throw off the mask?"

"Believing that he will consider the danger great, there is nothing which desperation can suggest which he will not oppose to your purpose."

"He dare not proceed to extremities. Dread of Lord Erpingham, who will not fail to seek me——"

"You forget that your zeal has forbidden Lord Erpingham to come."

"At least he will inquire——"

"And receive a lying answer. He will be told that your austere piety denies approach to all the world. He will next hear of your sickness, but be admonished that he must not intrude upon your solitude. At length he shall be informed of your decease, and then—then he may be permitted to gaze on your remains, when there shall be no danger of your tongue revealing aught that could be prejudicial to his interest, or derogatory to his character."

"What would you then advise?" said Edmund.

"To escape," replied the jester.

"But that is not in my power."

"With my assistance, I trust it may be effected. I have found a key which opens the door of the sepulchral vault, in which the flagellation was performed on the carcase of Brother Richard. Thence a series of passages extend, but to what precise point I have not yet ascertained, but I know that they lead beyond the walls of the monastery, and the fastenings are within. If we gain these unobserved, you go forth. I will remain to adjust matters, so that your flight shall not be too soon discovered, and the means by which you obtain your emancipation cannot be known."

"Why will you remain behind?"

"That my testimony, when required, may be less suspected. A charge made by two runaway monks would be

viewed with suspicion, and the oath of Nick Bray laughed at. But when I support your accusation, not having transgressed against the rules of the order myself, my very character will make against the wretch who brought me hither."

Edmund was grateful for the zeal which the jester manifested, but still argued that he could pass from the monastery with more ease and safety by application to Egbert, who would not, he was convinced, refuse him the permission he proposed to solicit. Bray insisted that the application would only confirm the misgivings of the abbot; but as Edmund thought little would be risked in making the experiment, it was finally resolved that it should be done on the following day. At night, in the event of failure, if no unexpected difficulty opposed the execution of such a design, Edmund consented to attempt leaving the monastery, by the way which his companion had recommended.

They parted, and Edmund impatiently awaited the return of day. The objects to which his attention was now directed had in some degree withdrawn his mind from that debilitating grief under which he had languished, and though during the last two nights he had slept but little, he found himself in an improved state of health. He was most cordially congratulated by the abbot, with an air of sincerity, which, added to the almost unearthly piety of his manner, while joining in devotional exercises, made Edmund ask himself whether what he had heard and seen might not admit of explanation.

What he purposed saying to Father Egbert, Edmund thought would put him to the test. He named what he wished, and felt convinced that Bray was mistaken unless he had wished to deceive, when the abbot, with all his accustomed benevolence of manner, intimated assent.

He doubted whether to avail himself of the licence thus accorded or not. To act on the mere assertions of one who had been a jester would be rash, and though he had witnessed what he viewed as a scene of disgraceful revelry, there was a possibility that the brothers whom he had supposed to be engaged in carousing were differently occupied. . There might be rites to which one so young could not be admitted, and the vessels used in them, it was just possible, would pass on a slight glance for the common ministers of drunkenness.

These considerations opposed the conviction of the abbot's profligacy. But he had soon reason to justify him in thinking the worst of Egbert. Having assented to his request to leave the house, the abbot applied himself with all the artifice he could use to dissuade Edmund from seeking Lord Erpingham. He pressed on his consideration the inconsistency which would be imputed, if he so early departed from the resolution he had announced, and for himself he confessed that he lamented to find the firmness of Edmund already shaken. He said that he had feared it would be so, and therefore it was that he had so repeatedly called upon him to give the subject his serious consideration, before he made that vow which he had now pronounced, and which could not be recalled.

To this Edmund replied by urging what the holy father himself had said, in favour of occasionally going forth, on former occasions. But Egbert found a vast difference between the present case and that of an ordinary monk, who had not so repeatedly and so decisively resolved on rending asunder the last link which connected him with the rest of the world.

All that he said served to prove that Bray had spoken but the truth. Edmund did not relax in his suit, nor express any intention of not acting on the permission of leaving the house, which had been granted. Edmund renewed his arguments, but the ear to which they were addressed was closed against his eloquence, and he found it necessary to abandon the attempt. In doing this, he took occasion to confess that he had seldom met with one so difficult to convince—that the change in Edmund's wishes was remarkably sudden, and he finished by observing, that as another change might follow as quickly, he would at least secure the applicant time to reflect before he risked any part of the high character for piety which he had already obtained. He desired it therefore to be understood, that the consent he had given to his leaving the monastery, must not be acted upon till the following day.

This conduct satisfied Edmund, that all that had been stated to the prejudice of the abbot was correct. In the benign smile which sat on his features, while he seemed to impose a kind restriction, Edmund recognised the most detestable hypocrisy, and it was followed by what he considered

a malignant glare, which embodied the rage of a demon. He was persuaded that it was the object of Egbert, if possible, to prevail on him to give up the determination to which he had come; but failing in his efforts to do this, Edmund no longer doubted that force would be used to prevent the accomplishment of his purpose.

His mind was fully made up to extricate himself by the way which the jester had pointed out. That such was his intention, he found an opportunity of stating in the day, and Bray promised to repair to him at the proper time.

Edmund anxiously waited for his approach, when the hour arrived which he thought best fitted for the accomplishment of their design. Midnight had sounded, and another of the fraternity had been round to the cells to call on their respective inmates. A new apprehension came stealing over Edmund's bosom. Might not this failure be justly imputed to negligence or treachery? If to the former, a guide so careless was little to be trusted; if to the latter, it was impossible for him to escape. Bray had been considered a careless mischievous character. That he did not scruple to wound another's feelings merely for sport, he had seen in his conduct towards the unfortunate Clifford. The chimes announced the hour of two, while his mind was thus engaged. He sadly listened, and hope seemed to expire as the sound died on his ear. "I am duped, or he is detected," he sighed, as he threw himself on his mattrass. He perceived that the lamp was expiring, but he considered he had no further occasion for light, and cared not to stretch forth his hand to trim it. Disappointment produced a listless drowsiness, and sleep closed his eyes. He suddenly woke, and thought he heard the signal of Bray. It was repeated, the door opened, and Bray entered.

"Master Edmund, are you here?" he inquired.

Edmund answered by expressing surprise, that he had not come sooner.

"I have been on the watch since midnight," said the jester, "but till now, we could not venture forth with safety. Some of the monks have been moving in the very direction we are to go. But come, be quick."

"Since it is so late, will it be wise to make the attempt now?"

"I think so. It will certainly subject you to some incon-

venience which might be avoided; but inconvenience is not to be regarded, where life is at stake."

"Undoubtedly not; but to what do you particularly refer?"

"Why I am fearful it will be too late for you to pass to Lord Erpingham's this morning, without risk of being followed and secured before you can explain your conduct."

"Indeed!"

"If we encounter any difficulty in making our way, as it is now past three o'clock, it will be, perhaps, almost five when you get outside the walls. What I would advise then, should be this, that you pass down the lane leading from Bishopsgate Street just by the *White Hart*, whence Wolsey once took his departure in state for Canterbury. Go straight by the wall, but turn to the right, before you get to Limping Saint Giles's."

"I do not know the place you mention."

"No!" cried Bray, with an air of ineffable surprise. Only to think now, in what ignorance you better sort of people are brought up! Why, *Limping Saint Giles's* is the knick name for *Cripplegate*, as *Redriff* is for *Rotherhithe*. But stay—You need not go so far by half a mile. Turn down the lane I have mentioned, pass the Tumbledown Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlem, which stands,—no, which falls therein, and then take your way to the right just before you reach Wall Brook. Do this, and you will ere long come to the *Dog-house* at Finsbury, where my friend the *Common Hunt*, that is the name of the office given to Dick Longthong, is to be found. Devoted to the instruction of the rising generation, it is his business to feed and educate my Lord Mayor's hounds, and a short time ago, let me tell you, he had some very promising puppies, which did their preceptor great credit."

The garrulity of the jester was now running away with him, and Edmund thought it necessary to remark that they had no time for conversation on such matters.

"That is true, my master; well then, Dick is my friend, and though he is now a great man, will pay you some attention if you mention Nick Bray. There, in any case, you can remain through the day, and after nightfall it will not be difficult for you to pass unobserved to Fickett's fields."

The lamp had expired, and they were now in total darkness.

"Follow me," said Bray.

"Can you find the way without a light?" Edmund inquired.

"Not very well," the other replied, "but I can borrow a light from the withdrawing room next the refectory."

"May not some one be there?"

"Should such be the case, there is an end of our journeying; for through that room we must pass. But come; we must advance cautiously."

They passed along the corridor without speaking. He carefully opened the door of the apartment which had been named. It was deserted apparently for the night, and Bray took the only lamp by which it was illuminated. He entered the passage through which they had moved on the night of the monk's funeral; and, descending as before, they soon saw the door of the vault.

"Now, master Edmund, take the lamp, while I apply my key to the lock. I hope the wards are not so rusty as they were some months ago, when all my strength would not suffice to get the key round. We are fortunate," he exclaimed on a sudden; "by marvellous good luck the door is unlocked to our hands."

He pushed the door open, and a violent gust of wind extinguished the lamp.

"Truly," said the jester, "this is a sore calamity. I like not the paths of darkness just now. To get another lamp I fear is impossible, and without one I am much afraid of some miscarriage."

"I think I saw a flash of light on the opposite side."

"And so did I. Lord, how forgetful I am! It came from the candles, which are constantly burning in the little crypt at the shrine of Our Lady. I shall make so free as to borrow one."

He then advanced into the vault, closely followed by Edmund. A flash of light was again seen, and Bray, turning round, sought to retrace his steps with the utmost precipitation.

"There is some one here beside ourselves," he whispered. "Follow me."

Edmund attempted to do so, but missed the door. He heard the jester's whisper, "This way," but he had not been able to follow, when a strong glare of light was thrown

on the wall. The door was now sufficiently visible, but he could not reach it without being seen by the bearer of the lanthorn; and aware of this, he on the instant shrunk behind a pillar which had impeded his retreat.

"Did you see nothing move?" inquired the holder of the light, who was no other than the abbot.

"Nothing," replied a female voice, "but the shadows of the pillars, as you change the situation of the lamp."

"The grave is ready," said he, "and I hope the child will yet be born, and entombed before daylight."

Edmund was thrilled will horror at what he heard. That moment he perceived the advancing lamp had thrown his shadow on the wall, full in the view of Egbert and his companion. He strove to conceal himself behind the pillar; but the abbot and his companion had marked the gliding image, and the former, impetuously rushing forward, demanded—

"Who is he that seeks concealment here?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Such boding thoughts did guilty conscience start.
TICKELL.

"It is I," said Edmund, who now found retreat or concealment utterly impossible.

The abbot directed the light full on his countenance, and gazed for some moments, without speaking, in astonishment which cannot be described. His rising indignation served to dissipate his confusion, and impatience to reproach put him in possession of speech.

"For what purpose have you dared to haunt this spot?" he inquired. "Is this your rigid observance of the duties which belong to a monastic life?"

"It may be," said Edmund, "that I somewhat deviate from the course prescribed to me; but I have sinned less against those rules by which the fraternity should be governed, than he who unblushingly reproves me."

"This insolence well accords with the refractory spirit which brought you hither. What is it you seek?"

"The means of passing from what ought to be a house of piety, but which you have made a den of abominable iniquity."

"Indeed!"

"Yes," said Edmund, "even so; I have had proofs irrefragable of the fact. I witnessed your drunken orgies when you believed no eye watched your proceedings. I have found you here this night; and yet more, I have heard from those lips words which leave no doubt of the awful guilt in which you are implicated. Your hypocrisy thus established, it is vain to dissemble."

"Agreed: it is vain to dissemble; and who is he that arrogates to himself such vast importance, as to suppose that in his presence dissimulation might be prudence?"

"I, in my own person, am nothing; but through my means you may be brought to answer for your conduct before those whom you will not dare to treat with contempt. That which has come to my knowledge shall be communicated to Lord Erpingham."

"By whom?"

"By me."

"Before you execute so noble a design, it will be necessary for you to pass from this monastery, and that, after what has now chanced, may not happen soon. You have told me that it is vain to dissemble, and from this time forward you shall find me sufficiently frank. Since you have become a spy on my conduct, I now announce to you that you shall never leave these walls alive."

"You will find the law too potent for your malice. My situation cannot long be concealed."

"There might have been much difficulty, and some hazard, in attempting concealment, had you from the first acted differently. Thanks to your folly, I am now absolutely master of your fate. Lord Erpingham, knowing of your anxiety to be dead to the world, will make no effort to ascertain your actual situation but through me. He shall hear much of your austere piety, but he shall never see your face—never hear the sound of your voice again. The ascendancy which I possess over him, and which sufficed to make him abjure his own nephew, will not fail to satisfy him that

you desire to see him no more, when all I say but corroborates what you yourself have told him."

The effrontery with which the individual whom Edmund, till lately, had regarded as a model of piety, proclaimed himself equal to any crime, filled the object of his wrath with equal amazement and horror. He made no reply; but a succession of ideas, growing out of his peculiar situation, ran through his mind. He reflected that all chance of leaving the house with the abbot's permission, was for ever lost. To quit it without his consent, since he had become more than an object of suspicion, would be extremely difficult. There was nothing to encourage a confident hope of success, if, having lost his ally, who was to have directed his footsteps, he should now attempt to execute his original design. But it was probable that a better opportunity would never offer. He had been told that the bolts of the door at the extremity of the passage which he was to traverse were its only fastenings: the abbot was alone, the female who had accompanied him having retired during their altercation; if then he could overpower the resistance which Egbert might offer, (and of his ability to do this he had no doubt,) it was possible that he might yet escape. The chances might be against success, but his situation was desperate, and he therefore resolved on making the attempt.

The time occupied by these thoughts was by no means equal to that which has been consumed in enumerating them. The abbot had scarcely ceased to indulge the disdainful smile of triumph which accompanied his last retort, when Edmund arrived at that result which has been stated. Little disposed to pause where they then where, Egbert raised his voice to a louder tone of menace.

"You shall not wait long for the reward of your presumption. Instantly retire."

"No," said Edmund: "I will advance."

"Advance! and whither would you advance, I pray?"

"I care not whither, so I find an outlet from this detested scene of lust and murder."

"You pass not this way," said the Abbot, opposing his person to the progress of Edmund, who now offered to cross the vault.

"By Heaven I will! Stand aside, or the consequences may be fatal."

"Villain!" thundered Egbert, "dare you threaten murder."

"I threaten self-defence; and he who opposes my endeavours to preserve my life, will do it at the peril of his own."

He offered to pass, and in the same moment snatched the lantern which the abbot had carried.

"Help, help!" the latter vociferated.

Edmund seized him by the throat with fury. "Attempt to repeat that cry," he exclaimed, "and by my soul's best hope I will silence you for ever."

He grasped the abbot so tight, that whatever his will, the power of renewing the cry was taken from him; his eyes rolled wildly, and Edmund, fearful that strangulation would actually ensue, slackened his hold. It occurred to him, that it would be wise to compel Egbert to be his guide, and judged that this might be effected by threats.

"Wretch!" he exclaimed, and he grasped him again with violence: "your last hour has sounded, if—"

At this moment he was seized from behind. Two monks had been brought to Egbert's assistance by his cries, or sent by his late companion. He struggled with desperation, but his efforts to break from them were unavailing.

"This is well," said Egbert; "you came in good time to witness the attempt on my life; here is sufficient proof to bring this offender to condign punishment. I now change my resolution: to-morrow morning shall see him in the hands of justice."

"Monster!" said Edmund, "you dare not execute your threat. Intrepid as you are in crime, you fear to meet me in the face of day."

"So the fool Clifford thought; he paid for his error with his ears; yours may cost you your life. Take him away," he added, directing his speech to the two monks, who still restrained Edmund's arms. "Take him to his cell, and watch through the night. In the morning the felon shall be given into the custody of others."

Edmund suffered himself to be conducted from the vault in silence. The brothers who were his guards conveyed him to his cell; then, having fastened the door on the outside, they continued to watch till they were summoned by the abbot to consider what was next to be done, in order to secure the prisoner.

It was really the intention of Egbert to carry into execution the threat which he had held out, but on reflection, he doubted the wisdom of taking such a step. He had indeed evidence that Edmund had threatened his life for opposing a retreat from the monastery; and to find that he had two witnesses to a fact so important seemed, in the first moment of triumph, all that was necessary to effect, with perfect security, the destruction of the being he hated. But again to appear in public as a prosecutor, was that he most anxiously desired to avoid. The statement Edmund would make, though it could not repel the charge which he had to prefer, might direct suspicion where he was most solicitous its glance should never be sped. Egbert knew the world, and knew that the most ridiculous calumnies, often repeated, obtain some degree of credit, and he thence drew the inference, that improbable truths, frequently stated, would in like manner win credence. To appear as the prosecutor of Edmund so soon after he had sustained that character in the process against Clifford, would fix all eyes on him, and nothing could prevent surmises which must prove fatal to him, if they were once seriously entertained.

Moreover, it occurred to him that the step which he had contemplated was not necessary to gratify his thirst for vengeance.

When Clifford incurred his resentment, he was at large, and capable of spreading injurious reports far and near. This was not the case with Edmund, who, already in his power, could be subjected to the severest imprisonment, without its being known beyond the limits of the monastery; and within them he had strong reasons for believing that he could confide, if not in the attachment, at least in the depravity of the brethren, to keep that for ever a secret which he would not have revealed.

Strictly to confine Edmund was his final resolution. Doomed to unwonted privations, to reproach and insult in the then state of his health, it was not improbable that he would rapidly decline. He might speedily die; but if his constitution should be too strong thus to be conquered, there were other means which could be used at pleasure.

Possessed of such advantages, the abbot resolved not to brave publicity, but boldly to exercise the coercive measures which were at his command.

His decision he communicated to the two monks, who attended to know his will. They approved of it; for they, like himself, were averse from challenging public observation. Already had the fate of divers religious houses, against the inmates of which charges less serious than those which might be brought against the brothers of the Trinity, been sealed by the fiat of the king. Though some might conceive Henry's horror of vice and disorder to be affected, all knew his fondness for the wealth of convents, and the good things still in the enjoyment of divers pious fraternities, to be most ardent and sincere. They were therefore persuaded, that, should the discipline be seriously assailed, the pretext thus supplied, would, in the judgment of the king, be quite sufficient to authorise a seizure, which would gratify his avarice under the cloak of pretended zeal for the interests of religion.

With these views and feelings it was resolved that Edmund should be removed to the prison cell, and there detained till death released him, or till circumstances should make it advisable to deal with him in a different manner.

CHAPTER XIX.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine every hour.
Fear not clouds will always low'r.

BURNS.

THE humble state to which Clifford was degraded has necessarily precluded him from being seen much with those whose proceedings have hitherto been the subject of this narrative. To him we must now direct our attention.

When life opened before Clifford, exulting in the advantages of a good constitution, an ample fortune, and high connections, he forgot to regulate his conduct by those prudential considerations which old men require should be honoured with unqualified reverence, which young men concur in neglecting altogether.

He indulged in many excesses, and his extravagances

brought him very soon to the end of his means. That his misconduct was great cannot be denied; but it ought to be added, that his virtues, as well as his vices, contributed to his ruin. If much wealth passed from him to purchase irregular enjoyments, still more was withdrawn from his store by an unreflecting generosity, ever on the alert to reward and relieve. False friendship and pretended distress attacked him by turns, and the borrower and the beggar combined their efforts to despoil the thoughtless stripling, who, while he honoured the virtues of his uncle, forgot the regulating precepts which from time to time it had been the object of Lord Erpingham to inculcate.

But in the opinion of that nobleman there were several circumstances which tended not to justify, but to palliate the improvidence of his young relation. Clifford's own fortune was small, compared with the wealth which he might one day expect to have at his command. His marriage with the Lady Elinor, the beautiful daughter of Sir Geoffrey Brandon, promised to enrich him, and eventually he might expect to succeed to the greater part, if not to the whole of the fortune of Lord Erpingham. Though these advantages ought not to have induced profligacy, the uncle was little surprised to find his young relation a spendthrift. He endeavoured repeatedly to reclaim the wanderer, but he never viewed his transgressions as sins which were not to be forgiven.

That depravity, which to cover its own misdoings could seek to blast the fame of a holy and exemplary character, he regarded as totally differing from all in which Clifford had previously offended. He anxiously hoped the charge preferred by father Egbert could not be sustained; but when it was established in the face of day by evidence above all question or suspicion, it was then that Lord Erpingham believed himself to be degraded by the crime of his relation, who, from that time forward, he regarded as a monster.

After Clifford sustained the ignominious punishment to which he was condemned, he endeavoured to fly from the haunts of all to whom he had once been known. He employed, with little management, the wretched remnant of his wealth in purchasing concealment. His lacerated flesh was soon cured, but his mind had received a shock no medical skill, no healing heart could reach. Reflection, which in

ordinary cases brings the troubled mind relief, yielded none to him; but, on the contrary, it served from day to day to renew and aggravate his grief, and his conduct was marked but by the mournful variations of delirious raving, and mute and motionless despair.

Near the river side, and at the distance of about a mile from the town of Woolwich, he found a retreat at a place called Podd's Elms, from the number of trees of that description which flourished on the spot. Here a poor man, who occasionally lived by fishing, and who at particular seasons found occupation in the town of Woolwich and Greenwich, had built himself a hut. It contained two small compartments, and one of these he consented to give up to Clifford. He, who had revelled in all the luxury which wealth could purchase, was content to rest in a place decidedly inferior to that in which his own hounds had been lodged. But Clifford was now dead to those feelings which can be wounded by privation and suffering. He sighed not for the splendid mansions which he had once known, for the joyous groups in which he had mingled, nor for the wealth he had formerly possessed. He could only brood over the disgrace which had fallen on him. When he remembered the scorn which the world at large heaped on his name, it came with overwhelming weight to crush him to the earth; but one other thought, rushing across his mind, traversed his fevered veins with the fiery rapidity of lightning; and as one more exquisite touch than the rest wakes the expiring wretch on the wheel to a thrilling exhibition of agony, so, when the idea that he was now an object of contempt to Elinor Brandon insinuated itself, he started from drooping melancholy, to the wildest display of frantic misery.

Sometimes he wandered beneath the shade of the elms, attempting to form plans of vengeance; but these he could not bring, in the then state of his mind, to any thing which even for him had the appearance of perfection. If a thought of vindication occurred, it was speedily dismissed, as too puerile to be entertained; and then, remembering the incredulity of the world, he would vainly attempt to give vent to the bitter anguish which he felt, and call upon the passing winds to bear his reproaches and execrations to those for whom they were breathed.

In one of these paroxysms he found himself at the edge of the river. It was nightfall. He had passed the day in perfect solitude, and all around was silent, save when the last breeze of autumn claimed a portion of the discoloured leaves, which still lingered on the neighbouring trees; and while his down-cast eyes fell on the gliding water beneath, he suddenly changed the course of his language.

"Why," said he, "why like a maniac should I wander here to load the careless winds with my foolish complaints and impotent curses? True, my enemies have triumphed over me; but is that a reason why I should become their ally, and prolong their triumph and my own torture, by remaining the inhabitant of a world, which, for me, through their machinations, is blasted for ever?"

He paused, revolving in his mind the thought which had occurred to him: his eyes were fixed on the water, he saw his own image therein, and exclaimed,

"I see the shadow of the shadow which I have become. Why should a wretch have two shadows? I will unite myself to that which I look upon. All that I once prized has passed away: whatever earth contains that is lovely has ceased to exist for me; why then continue to exist for that which is loathsome? It might be sin to die if any survived to mourn my death; but no eye will shed a tear for me, no heart will feel a pang far the lost Clifford."

"O! say not, think not so," cried one near him, who now anxiously pressed forward to prevent the completion of his design.

"What voice is that?" he demanded.

"Is it Clifford asks? Is the voice of Elinor no more remembered?"

"It may never be forgotten; but is it in truth the voice of Elinor which now fills my ears?"

"Let your doubt cease; look on me. A happy accident has furnished the clue to your retreat."

Clifford's eyes were fixed on the female, whose soothing voice detained him from suicide; but his gaze seemed that of a statue: there was no intelligence, no recognition in it.

"Seek ye in vain to recal the features of Elinor?" she inquired, in a tone which blended affliction with tenderness. It thrilled the unfortunate, but the emotion which it inspired was too mighty to admit of instant speech.

Elinor, while she accosted him, had offered to take his hand. He started back, and immediately after received its pressure, and in a faltering voice replied,

"I have heard that the foe of man can produce bright illusions to cheat the sinner he would lure to perdition; but thou art too divine to be the work of his hand. It is—it must be she who *was my* Elinor."

"Who will ever be thine."

"How!" he exclaimed. "What mean you? Has order sprang anew from chaos? Is the hypocrite who destroyed me known?"

Elinor mournfully shook her head, to intimate that she brought no such happy tidings.

"No," said he; "I was a driveller to believe it possible. The villain's web of fraud is not to be unravelled. But why are you here?"

"Because, though undetected by others, he is not believed by me."

"Nor by your father? Tell me, does he doubt my guilt?"

Elinor was silent.

"I thought you could not answer that. But since it is thus, how is it that you are here—at this hour too—and alone? What may this mean?"

"It means but this: that love, despising calumny, has discarded cold prudence, to follow and soothe affliction."

"Riddle not to me, Elinor. My ruined mind can scarcely pursue the common beaten track of conversation."

"In plainer language, then, while all beside declared you guilty, my heart proclaimed you innocent; and, though unhappily alone in this opinion, I could not yield to the reasonings of others."

"But why—why are you here?"

"Another lover has been named to me. I have been required to forsake you, because you were persecuted. My soul abhorred the thought. I felt that duty required from one faithful to virtue, that she should remain as constant to the lord of her affections in calamity, as the sordid crowd agree a woman should be to him who is not thus depressed."

"Amazement!" cried Clifford. "I know not what I ought to reply. But O! it were madness to seek in language that affluence of expression which might fitly embody the transport,—the ecstasy of this moment."

"Then Elinor is blessed: yet, trust me, I am sad to seek ye thus alone."

"But I—I," said Clifford, breathless with rapture, "am overjoyed. At first I hoped the world had done me justice—that you came by desire of your father to reclaim me; but to find that, this not being the case, you brave the scorn and reproach of all mankind for love of me, is even greater bliss than to be restored to the height from which I have fallen."

"But, my Clifford, you forget—"

"The baubles which the giddy multitude admire. True, Elinor; wealth I forget, and even fame I care not to remember: possessed of thee, a living jewel of such surpassing radiance, it were to transgress beyond the veriest miser's sinning, to covet one other good on earth."

"Since you feel thus, it is not for me to think of riches."

"What wealth could I have that would not shrink into worthlessness, placed by the side of such a treasure! Thou comest over my fading eyes, sweetly, gaily consoling to the vision, like the first rainbow which smiled on the deluged world, or like a ray of ethereal light, beaming in mercy on the darkness of perdition."

"If my presence can wake you to hope, I have not come hither in vain: but suffer not intoxicating joy to prevent the voice of reason from being heard. I dare not flatter myself that I shall bring happiness; but, by sharing your privations, my society may console, and my example teach resignation."

"Incomparable Elinor! I sometimes doubted if a being so sublime as Egeria could brook the thraldom of a world like this. But how is she surpassed, who sought the glory of a *Numa*, by that unearthly affection which stoops to lift from degradation and despair the lowly and debased thing that I am."

"Wrong not yourself, Clifford. Because you are condemned by the world—because slight failings have been swollen into crimes of enormous magnitude, you are not therefore debased. A day will come when your enemies shall be put to shame."

"I will indulge the thought, since you would inspire it:—but no; it is a treacherous thought, and must not be encouraged. If you share my fortune, you become the partner of incurable sorrow and lasting disgrace."

"Then sorrow and disgrace are my choice; for I will not consent to separate my destiny from yours."

"Bethink thee, Elinor, how much you must sacrifice, becoming the wife of Clifford."

"I nothing sacrifice in resigning that which I cannot value, for him whom I prize above the whole creation besides."

"Elinor, you know not what you do. I was never worthy of such excellence; but I am no longer even what I was. Calamity has destroyed me. I am impatient,—reckless,—too frequently not master of myself."

"Then you stand the more in need of such poor aid as I may supply."

"But my temper has become rough and churlish; and I shall harshly chide."

"And if you do, I will nothing reply; but I will weep, not that you are unkind to me, but that Heaven has been unkind to you."

"Back to your father, Elinor: I will none of you. A gem so costly should deck a nobler bosom."

"There is no nobler. I will hear of no other on earth. I will be thine alone."

"But softness like thine can ill contend with those rough storms which I must face."

"Doubt me not. By the side of Clifford I will brave danger like an Amazon; it is only when your frown falls on me that you shall see me tremble."

"But I have hitherto been weak and fickle; I shall be inconstant."

"I will not see it: I will only know you what I would have you. The rest of the world may condemn, but I will not heed their reproaches, nor believe you other than my heart tells me you are now."

Clifford was again speechless from joy; and, while pressing the fair hand of Elinor to his parched lips, his streaming eyes were raised to Heaven in silent gratitude.

CHAPTER XX.

His proud front unused to blush,
Was tinged with momentary flush.

GRATTAN.

In the midst of those follies which had engrossed the mind of Clifford, he had been inspired with a sincere passion for the interesting Elinor; and when that sentence was pronounced against him, which disgraced his name and ruined his prospects, the grief which pressed most heavily on his heart rose from the reflection that he might no longer aspire to her. When he found her unexpectedly restored, and under circumstances which rendered her more dear to him than she had previously been, he seemed to wake to a new existence. The pain he had known, the fortune he had lost, and even the shame which he had sustained, were forgotten, or regarded as trifles unworthy of remembrance. His bosom was too full of present joy to admit regret for the past, or anxiety for the future. Their marriage was solemnized, and, withdrawing to a small but convenient cottage, though their means were slender, they desired no happiness beyond what they found in each other's society.

But all that had remained to Clifford was soon expended; and the little gold which Elinor possessed when she sought the hiding place of her lover was also exhausted. Sinking by degrees, they passed through the melancholy gradations of poverty till they approached the extremity of distress, and began to look for its termination in famine.

It was then that the lovers awoke from their dream of bliss, and were compelled to acknowledge that passion, however pure and glowing, cannot ensure unalloyed felicity without deriving some aliment from sources which are far too gross and too contemptible to be viewed as of importance by those who, transported by thoughtless ecstasy, believe their affection too ethereal to require such solace as food, shelter, and repose may afford.

For himself, Clifford little regarded privation, but when he looked on the pale Elinor, and on the infant at her breast, the burning tear would steal down his cheek, and he

felt that if the joy he had tasted was great, the suffering which followed in its train was not less exquisite.

He, however, disdained to yield to his fate without a struggle, and would not suffer unmanly grief to prevent him from using the best exertion in his power to support those who had become indissolubly connected with him. To obtain what their wants required, there was no danger which he would not have braved. It was a harder task to bend a spirit like his to a lowly occupation, but affection triumphed over pride, and it has been seen, that he brought himself to submit to the most humiliating drudgery. It was with bitterness of heart that he gazed on Elinor thus reduced, but her courage never declined; and she endured not only without repining but with cheerfulness. She confessed no grief but that which arose from her being unable to tranquillise the ruffled spirits of her lord. Clifford, as he stated to Edmund, had come to the resolution of passing over to America. Elinor was not one moment in deciding to accompany him; and when the business of the *translation* had terminated, they repaired to Deal, in the hope of finding a passage by a vessel at that time lying in the Downs.

Clifford saw the master of the ship, and acquainted him with his wish. The sum which he had to tender was small, but the offer of his services in any way which might be required made up in some degree for the deficiency, and the mariner was content to receive them on board. Clifford congratulated himself on his good fortune. Not an hour was to be lost, as the vessel sailed that very day, and the boat was then leaving the shore for the last time. They had no reason to wish their departure deferred, as they had no property to arrange, no means of purchasing luxuries for their comfort on the voyage, and no friends to bid adieu.

Assisted by Clifford, Elinor had already passed into the boat; he was following, with the infant in his arms, when the child, unobserved, entangling his fingers in the string of the cap worn by his father, untied it. Clifford, as he stepped over the edge of the boat, felt it falling: he endeavoured to save it, but in vain; and he stood uncovered before the master and the sailors who were in the boat.

"How now, bedfellow!" cried the master; but the word bedfellow, then commonly used as an expression of kindness, was pronounced in a tone, which proved to the conscious

Clifford that it was used ironically and reproachfully. He hastened forward, took his seat in the boat, but offered no reply.

One of the sailors offered to push off.

"Tarry," roared the master, "my bark, the good *Make-shift*, is no galley in the which to receive thieves."

Clifford felt acutely that this speech was directed against him, and, rising with that fiery indignation which forgets all disparity of condition, he accosted the mariner:

"Mean you to call me thief? Breathe another word like that, and by the Saviour of the world you will run some risk of meeting with a sudden check."

He, however, reflected that it might be wise to subdue his wrath; and he added, with an effort at calmness, looking towards the sailors, "Put off the boat."

The master again interfered. "Softly," said he: "it may be that this gallant is no thief, but has merely had his ears removed for the accommodation of his cap. Nathless, this not being known to me, he shall not become one of my crew."

"What mean you?" demanded Clifford.

"Marry! this I mean, that you find no room on board the *Make-shift*."

"Varlet! have I not paid thee for my passage?"

"Take back the price of your company," the master replied, returning the sum which he had received from Clifford: "I cannot find accommodation meet for one of your calling, without some charge which I care not to incur."

"Accommodation!" said Clifford: "I have told you that I should crave but little."

"The accommodation to which my discourse turns," replied the master, "is not that which you might crave, but which you may deserve. Sea-tackle is much expensive; and I care not to squander away my cordage on knaves, who may as well tarry on land to get hanged."

Clifford sprung forward, in a transport of fury. The master first sought to evade, then to resist his attack, but both endeavours were fruitless. The rage of which he was the object gave super-human strength; and in a moment he was lifted from the boat, and hurled with violence into the sea. The sailors, who had begun to laugh at the ribaldry

of the master, were in consternation, and knew not whether to assist him or to defend themselves. One of them pushed off the boat.

"Put back," said Clifford, with a tone of authority which failed not to impress those to whom he spoke with the importance of yielding prompt obedience. They however ventured to say, that the master would be in danger of drowning if they neglected to succour him.

"And what then?" Clifford sternly asked. "If he sink while I am landing, he will drown alone; but if you scruple to obey my bidding, you may chance to drown with him."

They sullenly put the boat round, and Clifford, the child clinging round his neck, throwing his left arm round Elinor, and sustaining her weight, turned fiercely towards the boatmen, as if to intimate that thus encumbered, with his right arm alone he could bid defiance to them. He stepped backward to the end of the boat, and thence to the shore.

The sailors hastened to lift the master from the water, and Clifford leisurely retired. Anger for a time made him insensible of pain, but when his fury began to abate, his affliction was extreme. To be thwarted in the very moment when he believed the object he had most at heart to be accomplished, and when he was already exulting that he had taken his last step in that land which had witnessed his disgrace, inspired the most agonising regret. While he looked on the innocently smiling cause of the accident which had occurred, he sadly exclaimed,

"O guiltless mischief! Already has thy hand begun to revenge the wrong thou hast sustained from him who condemned thee to life."

"Perhaps," said Elinor, "he is the instrument of Providence to save his father from unsuspected peril."

It was her constant practice to endeavour thus to build hope on, and derive consolation from, every untoward occurrence. The remark which she made pointed to no expected event. But when, journeying through Kent, they heard, in the course of the succeeding week, that the *Make-shift* had perished at sea, and that all her crew was lost, while commiserating the fate of the unfortunate mariners, she then referred to the act of the child which had prevented them from sailing.

"See you not the finger of Providence which has already

enabled this unconscious babe to save his parents from destruction? After this, it were not merely weakness, but impiety, to despair."

It was not probable that another ship would speedily sail, and they were constrained to seek shelter in the place where Clifford had been concealed till he was discovered by Elinor. The fisherman was disposed to give up the whole of his wretched hovel at *Podd's Elms*; and miserable as this abode was, Elinor preferred it to superior accommodation, which must speedily exhaust the little fund they had accumulated, by means of which Clifford sought to pass to some country in which they might live forgotten and unknown.

Faithful to the principle on which she had originally avowed it to be her determination to act, Elinor rose superior to distress; and had Clifford felt equally at his ease, equally disposed to hope, and equally regardless of their present lowly condition, she had been happy. But he was restless and repining: he loathed the indolence in which his life was spent; and, discontented with himself, he sometimes forgot for a moment that tenderness which he had been accustomed to observe towards Elinor.

One evening he was walking by the river, when Elinor approached, leading her infant, and guiding and regulating its first efforts to walk. He perceived her, and hastily called to her,

"Come not hither; I want thee not."

"The night looks as if it would be stormy," she remarked; "I pray thee abide not here."

"I live in a perpetual storm: what then is the roaring of thunder, of winds, or of waves to me? But get thee gone; I said I wanted thee not."

"But you will forgive a few moments of disobedience, if I still draw near thee; for this is a dear and blessed spot to me, since here it was my fortune to arrest the rapid step of my Clifford, when frenzy had nearly consigned him to a watery grave."

"Your happy lot, Elinor!"

"Even so. Know you not the place where I surprised you?"

"I know it right well, and therefore did I bid thee avoid me. Go, I say."

Elinor was retiring, when he called to her in an altered tone—

"Come hither, Elinor. I spoke harshly; but I would not be unkind. I hate myself for being so irascible."

"You wrong yourself. You never chide from anger, but from sorrow; and knowing that, can I think you unkind?"

"Nay, Elinor, but I see it distresses you."

"It would distress me to hear you groan; and when there is unkindness in your speech, ascribing it to suffering, I am only distressed because you are in pain."

"I, Elinor, am as a lute: guarded with care, I might have been able to furnish gentle harmony; but exposed to the raging storm, my swollen or perished chords answer no longer to the delicate touch which should awaken music; save with irregular throbs and fearful discord."

"Rather say that mine is the unskilful hand that knows not how to seek the harmony it would call forth. Yet I did feel confident that I erred not when I sought to join you here."

"Come to me, Elinor, Look there—look in the water—what see you?"

"The reflections of our persons."

"No more?"

"No more, save that of the child."

"Aye, there it is, Elinor. On that well remembered night, when I gazed on the wave, one image,—but one, met my view; now I see three. Had I been left to perish then, the two poor destitute beings whose shadows are associated with mine had not been here, to pine with me if I continue to live; to mourn my loss if I die. I bade thee retire, because I wished not to contemplate the picture I now behold. Do you not hate me, Elinor, that I permitted the generous sacrifice your love prepared? Would to heaven you had left me.—Leave, leave, me now—get thee home."

A sound of footsteps near arrested their attention. Clifford looked round and saw the figure of a man pass the hut, and vanish among the elms in its rear.

"It is strange," said he, "that a lurker should be here: but it boots us little to know his errand. His presence will not endanger our wealth." Then resuming his former tone, he said, "Go home—go; I would have thee fly me?"

"Does my presence offend you?"

"It afflicts."

"And why?—Am I not as I have ever been?"

"Yes, Elinor, and more is the sorrow. Could I be what I have been, not for the proudest diamond on earth should'st thou leave my side."

"But being other than you were, you more require the aid of a comforter."

"But such you cannot be. Your presence exasperates almost to madness; for I feel, that instead of requiting such devotedness by the attentions of the lover or the husband worthy of you, I can but give a degraded felon to your arms."

"Leave such base, such unjust language to the disparaging world. I view thee not as one degraded, but as one oppressed. Trust me, thou art dearer to me than if thou hadst not been in this strait. As thou wert formerly I loved thee; but in calamity there is something sacred, which affection approaches with increasing fondness, and religious awe."

"Hence with these witcheries. You torture me. Go to your father—he may again receive you. Take the poor urchin with thee."

Again they perceived, while Clifford was speaking, the stranger they had before observed, who at this moment advanced in silence from the trees, as if to listen to their conversation.

"Come forward," Clifford called to him aloud. "If to contemplate wretchedness can delight, here shall you be gratified."

Perceiving this speech addressed to him, the unknown hastily retired.

"Go, Elinor," said Clifford, with persuasive mildness. "Your father, though he may not forgive, will receive. He will shelter your infant, and save him from those fearful evils which shall otherwise be his deplorable inheritance."

"I know this dread haunts you more than any other; but this you ought not to feel. Look on your boy; did he want just proportion I might fear for his welfare. But heaven has given him well fashioned limbs, and will in time bestow firmness, intelligence, and courage. Why then despond? The privations to which we can with difficulty reconcile ourselves will be as nothing to him; and inured to hardship, and accustomed to peril, he will stand forward

among the fearless, born to enterprise, and destined to success."

"Sweet comforter!" exclaimed Clifford, fondly pressing the hand of Elinor to his bosom; "it is thine to pour the softest balsam on my wounded heart. Though love, to be blessed, requires the power to bless, the invincible smile of that dear countenance, which no harshness can disturb, nor privation dispel, even now has the power of gilding ruin with joy, and relieving that prospect with a gleam of hope, which but for thee would only present the appalling gloom of unmitigated despair."

They approached their lowly resting-place, and their eyes were directed to the spot where they had twice perceived a stranger. Whoever he might be, his form was no longer to be seen; and Clifford, though the circumstance moved his curiosity, felt no alarm. Extreme poverty has at least the advantage of sparing those who endure it apprehensions to which under happier circumstances they would occasionally be exposed.

CHAPTER XXII.

Leave this vain sorrow,
Things being at the worst, begin to mend.

WEBSTER.

In consequence of the reflections which had determined Egbert, he passed to the cell in which Edmund rested. The day had dawned when he entered, accompanied by the brothers of whose assistance he had previously availed himself. Edmund supposed they came to execute the threat which had been held out to him, but was astonished at their early appearance. He made no remark, and secretly rejoiced that the moment was already come when he should be enabled to prefer his charge against Egbert; for the inexperience of Edmund, notwithstanding all he had heard of Clifford, encouraged a confident hope, that because justice was on his side he could not fail to command belief, and put to shame his accusers.

They approached in silence. He found himself suddenly blindfolded, and expected immediate assassination. Nothing remained but to meet his fate with firmness. They passed along the corridor, and descended, as he believed, the steps at the extremity of the passage leading from the refectory. A door was then opened, and whether it was that of the burial place or of some adjoining vault, he could not determine. He was now made to ascend six or eight steps, when another door was opened, which admitted them into a small damp cell, and here his eyes were unbound. He did not at once comprehend the real purpose of those who brought him there, for to him this dismal apartment seemed quite as well fitted for a murder, as for detention,—for a tomb, as for a prison.

"Here is your home," said Egbert.

"Is it here that I am to die?" inquired Edmund.

"It may so fall out."

"Then all the mercy I can implore with any chance of being listened to, is, that you will dispatch your bloody work as briefly as possible."

"No, fool, it is not my pleasure to dismiss thee suddenly from life. To take such a step I am not prepared."

"Would that be too kind?"

"It might prove so. Inquiries are now so frequently made into the affairs of religious establishments, that it would ill assort with those measures which prudence dictates to have thee die too soon. Those who take an interest in thy fate must first be prepared for such a catastrophe. When they have been told that thy life is in danger—when they have seen thee—"

"Seen me!"

"Aye, when they have *seen*;—I knew that word would wake a spark of hope to mock thee for a moment;—they may see thee, but not to soothe thee in thy latest hour, no, nor listen to the vengeful tale which thou wouldst fain relate of Egbert. Ere they approach, care shall be taken to steep thy senses in drowsy forgetfulness. They shalt behold thee as one on whom the leaden hand of death hath already fallen, though as yet he has not grasped his mean prize. They shall look upon thee thus, and thereupon report the truth abroad, that thy death is inevitable, but thou shall not recognise them. It shall be thine to know that they

are about to approach, and afterwards to mourn that they have fled whilst thou wert all unconscious of their coming."

"Monster! this cowardly baseness exceeds all that even the previous knowledge of thee could suggest."

"So I trust, for I have ever believed myself above the comprehension of the world."

"Yet you fear that it would rightly estimate you now, or you would not shrink from appearing before it as my accuser, which you announced to be your purpose but a few hours since."

"Reflection has since whispered that he who can safely inflict vengeance with his own hand, acts unwisely to call in the aid of any halting auxiliary."

"And am I to have no trial?"

"None; here is your resting place;—here, where daylight never enters, shall you remain. The lamp which I bear shall be left for your accommodation, that you may see the damp trickle down the black walls, and mark the amblings of the reptiles destined to be your companions. I would not leave you in darkness, lest you should be ignorant of a part of the accommodation prepared for you."

"These efforts at revenge are impotent," said Edmund: "to the reptiles of which you speak, I shall turn with respect, after gazing on an object so much more odious and contemptible as that which now offends my vision."

"I will not long detain you from those sublime reveries in which you pant to indulge. Look round on these walls, look on them, and let hope expire."

Edmund surveyed them with a steady eye, and then looked upon Egbert.

"This," said the monk, "is the meet reward of persevering folly. Bear it in mind I advised thee not to think of a monastery. Thou comest not here by invitation of mine."

"I can well conceive it was not thy wish to have one for a witness of thy doings, who had a heart not so far depraved as to fit him for the fellowship of wretches whose crimes extend to murder."

"To murder!"

"Aye, thou knowest it well. My ear deceived me not. Too well I heard thee express the horrid hope that the infant about to be born might rest in its grave before another day had risen."

"True, driveller; but what has that to do with murder?"

"To the wilful, unjustifiable destruction of human life I give no other name."

"It is of little use to change words with thee. But yet thy dulness moves my pity, and I feel tempted to enlighten thine ignorance. That which thou wouldest foolishly condemn as murder, I can demonstrate as true humanity."

"At least you can assert it. But spare yourself the trouble, with a view to my improvement."

"Nay," cried Egbert, somewhat excited by the contemptuous indifference of Edmund, "I will prove it so that even you shall concur with me. When one of two must perish, the parent or the offspring, can humanity hesitate for a moment whether to extinguish the dim perceptions of unconscious infancy, or sacrifice the mother in the bloom of mature life?"

I hear the sound of your voice, but listen not to the course of your reasoning,—if reasoning that may be named which aims at the justification of murder."

"Your humanity," said Egbert, with a mingled expression of wrath and disdain, "would, I suppose, take an opposite course. You would give the parent death, and call it virtue to doom a nun to be entombed alive."

"How!" exclaimed Edmund, no more affecting indifference to what fell from the lips of his enemy.

The abbot mistook the cause of that emotion, which he failed not to observe, and believing the exclamation to grow on the mention which he had made of the tremendous punishment awarded against the nun who forgot her vows, he proceeded:—

"Such is the penalty exacted from the tender being who obeys the impulse of nature in opposition to her engagements with the church. Immured between walls from which no outlet is permitted, one sad meal is provided for the doomed, that her sufferings may be protracted for a day or two to give her time for prayer. Such is the sentence which your humanity would pronounce, in failing to blot out that existence which, if not quenched at once, must subject the pale votaress of religion to the horrid inflictions decreed in such cases by the secret rules and ancient practice of the sisters of the order of Saint Helen."

Edmund shuddered when Egbert confessed that the female

of whom he had been speaking was a nun, at the remote idea that Mariana might by possibility be exposed to the misery of associating with persons of impure life; but when he found that what he feared might happen, was that which had actually occurred, his horror knew no bounds. He groaned deeply, and wildly gazing on his informant, he faltered,—

"Speak ye of St. Helen?"

"I did. I have told you what has been in other times the practice of that sisterhood, and now leave you to exult in the superior humanity which would—"

"Barbarian, cease! bring your dagger or your bowl. I will stand firm while you use the one, or readily drain the other. But if one atom of humanity remains in that form, repeat not the fearful outrage you have committed on my startled senses."

"What mummery is this?" cried the priest, looking first on Edmund, and then on his companions.

"Was it for this," exclaimed Edmund, giving vent to the sad reflections which invaded his bosom, without regarding Egbert; "was it for this that two hearts were torn asunder?"

Egbert started.

"You have done well," said he. "I knew that disappointed love had first moved you to enter a monastery; but I remembered not, occupied as I have been, the beauty who had influenced your conduct. If you err in all else I will not deny that the charms of Mariana merited your attention. I will prove this my sincere opinion, by bestowing upon her no small portion of my regard."

"Villain or devil, whichever thou art, what horrid meaning lurks beneath thy ambiguous speech and scowling eye? At what would thy depravity aspire?"

"At Mariana. You need not be told that the subterranean recesses, destined formerly to be the prison and the sepulchre of frail members of the sisterhood, are now more humanely, more wisely made the means of communicating joy and consolation to those who tread in the footsteps of St. Helen. Availing myself of these, what shall bar me from the beauty!"

"You dare not that way bend your thoughts. You cannot meditate such fearful profanation. You dare not

attempt to sully that angelic being—that breathing image of the Deity."

"But I shall not fear to worship it."

"Her dignity and virtue will repel. You cannot—dare not use violence."

"What I dare do, and what in regard to Mariana I shall do, may be matters quite distinct. From violence at present she is safe, nor do I think that it is likely she will be exposed to it hereafter. Leaving the world and its pleasures with avowed regret, the maid will perhaps be consoled to know that she who has courage to do herself justice, may baffle the cold calculations of persecuting friends."

"Away. You mean not what you say. Your object was to torture, and I cannot deny that you have been successful."

"My object is to make you feel the power you have braved, and tremble for the wrath you have incurred. In me you see a man whose heart has ever been the seat of the fiercest passions. My destiny placed me in that situation in which my all depended on their being subdued or disguised. I strove in vain to conquer them, but laboured more successfully at concealment. Momentary imprudence betrayed my secret; successful artifice retrieved the miscarriage. Aged dreamers, who had outlived the capability of knowing enjoyment, deluded the world into the idle belief that it was religion to abstain from pleasures which had been placed beyond their reach for ever. The tyrannic sway which their principles obtained, doomed me to an extended career of misery, or a persevering course of bold hypocrisy. I have decided for the latter; and you will find I lack not courage to seize all the advantages which it may offer, and to meet all the perils which may ensue.

Edmund gazed on the speaker with a look of wonder. The ingenuous depravity of Egbert astonished and confounded him; but the fierce emotions which raged in his breast precluded reply.

The monk, transported with the glow of triumph, left him to his loathsome solitude, but not till he had intimated that vengeance, at present but imperfectly satisfied, might yet inflict severer pain, and give the lover an opportunity of beholding his mistress overpowered by force, or, more proba-

bly won by persuasion, in the arms of another, the degraded slave of his will.

CHAPTER XIII.

Fool that I was, to start at my own shadow,
And be the shallow fool of coward Conscience.

HOME.

AFTER what had occurred in the monastery, Egbert considered it politic to see Lord Erpingham without delay. Though he had little apprehension that any thing that he wished to remain unknown would transpire, he was anxious to be guarded on all points. Yielding to the wish of Edmund, Lord Erpingham had ceased to desire to see him. The secret of his confinement could only be revealed by those who, from the licence they enjoyed in common with himself, were equally interested in keeping the world ignorant of the crimes and disorders which prevailed in the establishment; but he now wished to make a statement which, though calculated wholly to mislead, should have a slight connection with truth; so that it might seem to be corroborated even by the accusation which Edmund was disposed to bring forward, should he ever be enabled to do so.

It was Friday, and Lord Erpingham, accustomed to receive the monk on that day to assist him in his devotional exercises, looked for his coming with some impatience. He was seated in his study, absorbed in meditation. Ferdinand was near, and had, as was his custom, preserved a moody silence for some hours. The attention of Lord Erpingham rested on his secretary; and the fiery glance which flashed from the eyes of the South American created a momentary surprise. Full often had the peer wondered at the thoughtful reserve which he marked in so young a man. At first he had supposed the retirement which he courted to be preferred on account of scanty means. It was the object of his liberality to remove the necessity of submitting to pri-

vation; but the mysterious grief which oppressed him was not to be cured or diminished. Assistance was courteously but coldly declined, or, after repeated refusals, most unwillingly received.

Lord Erpingham thought he observed confusion and embarrassment in Ferdinand when their eyes met: but this idea passed away, and the imperturbable composure which usually sat on his countenance remained.

"The day wears fast, Ferdinand," said the peer. "I begin to fear the holy father cannot leave the monastery, and that we shall pass the evening alone."

"Alone, my lord! Think you, we shall be wholly alone?"

"I do; but why do you attach so much importance to that circumstance?"

"Because—because," said Ferdinand, and he hesitated for a moment,—"because I think we have never yet passed a whole afternoon and evening alone, and without expecting any one;—and—"

"You pause and cease to speak, without appearing to have uttered what you had it in your mind to say. It has often struck me, and I know not why it now comes over me with peculiar force, that you have something to impart, which you would wish to communicate when no one is by."

"I am not aware, my lord, that any thing in my conduct might be expected to wake such an idea."

"It may be that I am wrong; but tell me if I am so."

"My lord, I have nothing to communicate now—nothing *now*."

"Nothing now! Does this mean that the time is gone by at which you would have communicated?"

"No, my lord."

"Then am I to conclude that you have something to tell which you prefer reserving till a future season."

"I meant not to *say* that. But, my lord, some one approaches by the private staircase. He is here."

"It is the holy father," Lord Erpingham exclaimed with lively satisfaction. "I began to fear," he said, as Egbert entered, "that other duties would detain you till it would be too late to assist one not wholly under your guidance."

"And I was not without apprehension that such would be the case. Sorry am I to state that my delay has been

caused by that which you will bear with sorrow. A grievous malady has attacked the life of Edmund. I tarried first to soothe the sufferer, as far as might be, and then lingered in the hope of being enabled, by doing so, to bring you better tidings of the young man."

"I am concerned to know that he is sick; but, doubtless, from your kind care, he has received all needful appliances."

"What medical skill can accomplish—and with the blessing of the Most High it may do much—will assuredly be effected for his relief."

"To what cause ascribe you this sudden visitation?"

"To overflowing piety. Not content with observing the ordinary usages of the house, he inflicts uncalled-for penances on himself. Yesternight I discovered him in the sepulchral vault. Thither I myself repaired, as is my custom, to indulge in solemn contemplation, when, with much astonishment, I found him there alone. He had doubtless sought the resting-place of the departed for a like holy purpose. Such I am led to infer was his object. He stated it not; but what else could take a pious youth, at midnight, to linger among the mouldering dead?"

"Methinks," said Lord Erpingham, "it might be well to admonish him not to use such freedoms with his constitution."

"This I have done; and I have even, though much it wounded my feelings to coerce one so amiable, though somewhat misled, adventured to lay him under some kindly restraint, to the end that a life so dear may not again be endangered."

"You have done well; but do you consider the danger great?"

"Previous sickness had wasted Edmund, and now, aggravated as his disorder has been, I consider the symptoms which have manifested themselves to be in no slight degree alarming, if aught indeed may be so named which promises to receive the weary pilgrim from the loathed thraldom of this cheerless world."

The air of resigned devotion with which he spoke was too exquisitely acted to allow his sincerity to be doubted.

"Wisely," said Lord Erpingham, "do you direct our thoughts to those sublime subjects of contemplation which, in the hour of distress, more than reconcile man to his fate,

sustain by immortal hope, and lift him above his present destiny."

"Aye," said Ferdinand, with solemnity, but with a seeming eagerness for speech which was unusual with him, "such hope will indeed lift man above his fate. Happy is he who can cherish it. But even of those who profess to do so, I fear, holy sir, that many sin against the truth, and that, affecting piety to cover crime, they but invite deeper damnation than might overtake humbler pretensions."

The impressive energy and strong feeling with which Ferdinand spoke, startled the monk. Conscience told him that such a speech might with propriety be addressed to him in reference to his own conduct, and fear whispered that by some incomprehensible means he might have become acquainted with what he had persuaded himself was then, and would ever remain, a profound secret. Lord Erpingham noticed the surprise of the ecclesiastic, and thought it right to speak in explanation of the remark which had caused it.

"You look, father, as if you supposed some particular object had been adverted to: such is not the case; but Ferdinand is too apt to suffer his contemplation to dwell on the crimes of those who disgrace their nature and their name."

"Surely, my lord," Ferdinand remarked, "such exposition was unnecessary? The pious minister of Heaven your lordship cannot suppose has any reason for thinking my remark other than general."

This speech did any thing but diminish the alarm previously inspired. The tone with which he declared the abbot could have no reason to consider the remark he had made other than general, was given with an emphasis that seemed ironical. He was far from being disposed patiently to endure that affronting inuendos, thrown out in his presence, should remain unanswered; but he feared to express what he felt, and judged, at all events, that it would be wisdom not to risk hastening exposure by braving the perils of explanation. There was indeed a monk, William de Broke, who had on a former day accompanied him to Fickett's-fields, and who, while he himself was in attendance on Lord Erpingham, had conversed with Ferdinand. He could have told much; but his depravity was so well ascertained that Egbert thought on that he could securely depend. But still

the abbot's embarrassment was great in the extreme. Disconcerted by what had already been said, and trembling for that which might follow, he was at a loss for a reply, and hardly dared to look on one who had, as it appeared to him, not scrupled to hold the language of indignant accusation.

While Egbert was thus doubtful what course to take, a note was brought to Lord Erpingham. The peer desired to see the bearer, and retired for that purpose.

It would be difficult to say whether Egbert was more relieved or terrified by this incident. He found himself alone with Ferdinand; and though, on the one hand, he was glad that what he might say should be uttered in the absence of Lord Erpingham, on the other, he suspected that the presence which before sheltered him from open reproach being no longer interposed in his behalf, the moment was arrived when all which he most dreaded would be poured into his ear. Yet it could not be that William de Broke would betray him; and that the intelligence of which he feared Ferdinand was possessed could be derived from any other informant seemed nearly impossible.

Ferdinand, the moment Lord Erpingham retired, again accosted the priest:—

"You, sir, by virtue of your holy office, know much of the human heart, and I solicit no breach of confidence reposed in you, when I ask, comes it not within your knowledge that there are those who, schooled in dissimulation through a long series of years, cheat their fellows by pretending that their meditations and hopes are always fixed on heaven, though conscious of having violated the most sacred duties on earth? Give me answer."

Egbert stammered, with increased confusion,—"The question—the question is so unexpected—that—I—guess not what motive can prompt the asking of it."

"And what has my motive to do with your reply? The question you might answer, methinks, with little hesitation."

The ecclesiastic paused. His eyes were fixed on those of Ferdinand, as if he sought to read the naked thought as it flitted from the brain, before it could be clothed in speech.

"Have you known none such?" demanded the persevering Ferdinand.

"In the course of my life it may be that such melancholy instances of frailty have come before me."

"Can you, as the teacher of holy truth, speak doubtfully on such a subject?"

"I think that which I have already said amounts to an admission."

"Then tell me," he continued, raising his voice, "is not that soul doomed to perdition, cut off from salvation hereafter, and its owner entitled to no forbearance here, which could deliberately resolve to immolate innocence and matchless beauty on the altar of sordid lust, nor seek to preserve that tender existence of which he himself was the author?"

A ghastly paleness invaded the cheek of Egbert. He attempted no reply, but shrunk back with undisguised trepidation.

"I see," said Ferdinand, "that the bare mention of crimes like these has almost overwhelmed you with horror."

Terror had wrought conviction on the mind of Egbert that he had been betrayed. In the hurry of the moment he forgot that his design against Mariana was so recently formed, that it was impossible Ferdinand could have received positive information on the subject from any one. The warmth with which her relation had spoken confirmed his worst fears; and he endeavoured to appease in some degree the storm, which his terrified imagination suggested, was about to burst with tremendous fury on his head.

"It is not so. By heaven, no attempt—not the slightest—has been made."

"Of what do you speak?" inquired Ferdinand.

This question, though it did not dispel Egbert's fears, awoke a hope that there might be some mistake. He was too artful to give a direct answer to the question, by uttering that name which, in his confusion at first, had nearly escaped from his lips; and he ventured on a question.

"I would ask to what your speech referred?"

"I would not suspect you of duplicity, father," said Ferdinand; "but if you can regard my interrogatories as put with allusion to any particular individual whom I may now have in my eye, surely the case is too monstrous to be other than singular."

The language of Ferdinand was not very consoling, but his manner encouraged a belief that the indignation Egbert had supposed directed against himself, was in truth called forth by another offender. Who that could be, did not

appear. He knew Lord Erpingham to be sincerely virtuous and humane, and had heard of no one connected with his lordship to whom the character drawn by Ferdinand could belong. Emboldened by the tranquil and not hostile tone which he now remarked, he risked an assertion which was equivalent to putting that question, the answer to which he impatiently panted to gain, but trembled to hear.

"It is my hope that no such weakness—that no such crime—can be proved against any member of the church; —that no ecclesiastic can have so far forgotten his duty."

"No, holy sir, that would be a perfection in sin which I believe has not yet been attained. I have no suspicion that the church is disgraced by one so lost."

Egbert felt as though a new existence had been bestowed, when Ferdinand thus unequivocally declared that it was not towards him that suspicion pointed; but he trembled when he reflected how nearly his own speech had betrayed him. Self-reproach, not for crimes committed, but for the disclosure which startled conscience had almost made, was strong in his bosom. He despised himself for the weakness which had endangered him, and hastened to repair the error, and to act the serene and holy teacher of truth.

"I am shocked," he said, "at the bare idea of transgressions like those which you have imagined, but must confess that there are men, who, professing much piety, are strangely misled."

"The reflection is melancholy, and I have sometimes wondered why temptations, powerful as those which seduce from virtue, should beset the path of beings so weak as we are."

"Doubtless they are designed to try us. If severe the ordeal, remember how vast the reward which heaven holds out to triumphant righteousness. Privations are painful; but then, how sweetly sustaining the reflection that every day brings the pious heart nearer to its everlasting resting place,—nearer to the prize on which its dreams, and thoughts, and sacred hopes, are fixed."

Lord Erpingham entered.

"You may marvel," he said, "that I have so long delayed; but one has been with me, charged with a message from a learned serjeant, praying me that I will in no case fail to be at a noble repast he and his brethren give to-morrow, at

which he has been told to look for the presence of the king, who has, so I am informed, expressed desire for my attendance."

"Then fortify your faith, my lord, and muster well your courage; for now that he hath cut off Sir Thomas More, it may be that the king would see you presiding over affairs of state. Therefore must you be wary, or your soul shall be in danger of falling to the blandishments of the heretic, or your head of being cut off by the sword of the executioner."

"I trust, holy father, I shall not want firmness to act up to the principles which I have avowed, feeling, as I do, that it were far better that this head should presently be neighbour to that of my dear friend Sir Thomas, which but yesterday I sighed to view on London Bridge, than that I should fail in what I owe to Heaven."

Lord Erpingham then craved spiritual aid from the ecclesiastic, to prepare him for the interview he contemplated. In giving the assistance desired, which Egbert did with all his wonted solemnity, he failed not from time to time to touch on temporal matters, and especially to hint that godly avengers might yet arise, and that speedily, to bend the neck of the stubborn Pharaoh who oppressed the church, and whose heresy, he did not scruple to hint, went, in his judgment, to annihilate his right to reign in England.

Though Lord Erpingham was not prepared to acquiesce in the demands King Henry made on the consciences of his subjects, he was unwilling to go the lengths which, it should seem from what Egbert had said, others thought justifiable. He expressed both displeasure and surprise at what he had heard, but exercises of devotion soon superseded politics.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sternly he pronounced
The rigid interdiction, which resounds
Yet dreadful in mine ear.

MILTON.

THE terrors which had for a moment disturbed Egbert were no more. He had prepared the way for completing his

triumph by the destruction of Edmund; and secure from interruption and discovery, no relenting weakness was likely to interfere with the execution of his purpose.

Confined in the dungeon to which he had been conducted, Edmund expected no relief but from death. To this he could have reconciled his mind, but the thoughts which had been inspired by the last words of Egbert, disturbed him infinitely more than any apprehension of suffering in his own person could by possibility have done. Imagination placed before him the figure of Mariana, not such as he had once seen her, wearing the cheerful glow of health and innocence: but the pale, weeping, expiring victim of a remorseless hypocrite.

He endeavoured to calm the tumult in his mind, by reflecting that it was his duty to submit with resignation to the Divine will. But reason indignantly took arms at the thought, and insisted that it were little better than blasphemy to regard as such the sanguinary decree of a wretch who outraged all laws, whether human or divine. The right to resist he felt assured was his, but he in vain looked for the means: the walls of his prison were not to be shaken by his rage; and the iron-guarded door was not to be forced by anguish or despair.

Once a day he was supplied with bread and water. They were brought by William de Broke. This man seemed well fitted for the duty imposed upon him, or which he had voluntarily taken upon himself. He was rather tall in stature, and much resembled, as well in form as in height, the prisoner to whom he was appointed to administer. His hair was flaxen, and his countenance, which was ever of a ghastly paleness, had formerly been handsome, but had now an expression of calm obduracy, more distinctly indicative of a malignant heart than the ordinary characteristics of stormy ferocity would have been. He looked as if his blood, suddenly arrested in its course, had at once checked or annihilated the current of those feelings which animate the mass of mankind; and retaining the form of a mortal, but dead to all the sympathies of life, those who looked on him might almost believe that an envious fiend had escaped from another world, to deride the miseries, and to outrage the feelings, of sufferers in this.

His character described, it is almost superfluous to picture

the feelings with which he regarded Edmund. To see a youth who might have revelled in all the luxuries of life, in a situation so deplorable as that which he had daily opportunities of witnessing, excited in him a sensation approaching the nearest to delight of any that he was yet capable of knowing. So great was the treat, that he could not observe the injunctions laid upon him, which were to place coarse aliments of which he was the bearer before the prisoner in silence, and retire with all expedition. William paused each time that he came, as if he wanted resolution to abstain from feasting his eyes on affliction so exquisite.

"Your stedfast gaze is fixed on me," said Edmund, one day: "it may be that you have some touch of humanity, and would fain relieve a suffering fellow-man."

"And how, my crest-fallen gentle, can that be done?"

"By enabling me to pass from this dreary abode, or by conveying true intelligence to Lord Erpingham of the treatment I have received."

"To what purpose?"

"To the end that he being so apprised of my peril and distress, shall use such means as his discretion will suggest to procure my enlargement, so that I may bring the guilty chief of this fraternity to account for his misdoings, and save one whose destruction he now meditates from the toils which he prepares."

"A wish so just and modest," William replied, "shall meet with all the attention it deserves. But, ere more speech is wasted, tell me this; how shall my doing what you desire tend to my own singular pleasure or advancement?"

"A higher reward than even kings could bestow, will be his who rescues a fellow-creature from unmerited punishment and death."

"Your piety no doubt refers to heaven. That is in verity a high reward; but since the enterprise promises me nought on earth—"

"Nay, but it is not so. Lord Erpingham shall largely requite your timely aid with gold or land; and all his influence, which many know has not been small, shall be exerted to procure for you the best promotion which you would crave in church or state."

Though it was impossible for William to feel compassion,

he was not wholly unmoved by the appeal which Edmund now made to his avarice and ambition. The name of Lord Erpingham gave weight to the promises of the captive; and if they did not decide William to labour for his benefit, they occasioned him some perplexity, and he at least judged it worth while to dissemble for the present.

"The thing you ask, whatever my inclination may be, is passing difficult."

"Heed not difficulty where more than life is at stake; for, God is my judge, I view existence but as a feather in the scale, compared with the sacrilegious outrage in another place, now contemplated by Egbert."

"I understand you; but when you counsel that I should not heed difficulty, you advise that I should expose myself to frightful peril without serving you. Small were the chance, if I conveyed you hence by the winding passage towards the refectory, that I could unobserved in broad day conduct you thence, and along the corridor leading therefrom to the yard, and thence by the lodge to the open street, without being observed."

"It would be madness to suppose that this may be done. But can you devise no other means? Favoured by night, might not that be practicable, which by day is hopeless?"

"By night, locks, bolts, and bars, must be encountered. Yet a thought occurs to me; I have imagined a mode in which I might accomplish all you desire; but then gold, present gold, were needed."

"Alas! I have none. Little deeming that gold would ever be desirable within these walls, I brought no wealth with me."

"Bethink thee well. Perhaps some valuables may remain to you, the possession of which you remember not at this moment, or you may be able to point out the means of obtaining a prompt supply. But I must not tarry now, or it may be suspected that we have intelligence together."

He withdrew, and left Edmund in doubt, but yet disposed to believe that, as he had found one disposed to lend a favourable ear to his representations, means might be devised to regain liberty.

William, far from desiring to impart comfort to a sufferer, exulted that he had inspired a hope which he could rudely blast at his pleasure. But the bribe was too splendid not

to merit consideration. In him premature decay had inspired sincere hatred of the world; nor could he, without doing some violence to his feelings, save a guiltless man from a ferocious enemy. He might, however, have made this sacrifice, had the task been less difficult; but when he reflected on the risk to be encountered,—on the vengeance of which he must become the object in the event of failure, and further, when he considered that Edmund, when at large, might be incapable of making his promises good, he was not long in arriving at the conclusion that it was better to secure the joy of inflicting additional torture on the ill-fated prisoner, than to expose himself to the consequences of being known to favour the meditated escape.

Edmund awaited his return on the following day with impatience. William at length entered, and the captive eagerly demanded if he had imagined the means of accomplishing the object which he supposed him to have at heart.

"I could desire to know if you have discovered any way of conquering the difficulty I yesterday mentioned, as opposed to your enlargement."

"Alas! no. I have a ring with a jewel in it, which I wore when I came to the monastery, and which, though I ceased to wear it, I have by accident borne about my person."

"This," said William, as he received it, "is of some value. Have you nought beside?"

"Nothing; but on my liberation large funds shall be placed at your command."

"Indeed! May that be depended upon?"

"Assuredly."

"Then, nothing remains but that I inform you all doubt may at once terminate."

"You speak with unexpected heart-sustaining confidence."

"I do; but trust me, but few days shall elapse before you pass hence."

"And by what means will my release be effected?"

"Your release—moderate your joy, for I see it is not small;—your release shall be effected—by death."

Edmund drew back, unable to conceal the horror which the perfidy of the monk inspired.

"Yes, fool," the latter continued; "beneath his icy touch

the restraint at which you repine will terminate. But hope not that it shall otherwise find an end."

"Thy will be done!" exclaimed Edmund, without looking on the wretch who mocked him, and endeavouring to raise his thoughts with humble resignation to the Deity.

"Having addressed your first prayer to me," cried William, "you now send the remnant of your petition to heaven. What bribe will you offer there? I hope it will be something better than the poor ring which was your offering to me."

"What may this import?" cried a voice behind.

William turned his head, and saw father Egbert.

"You are strangely moved," the abbot remarked. "What is the occasion?"

"But this; the pious Edmund, whom you recently surprised attempting to escape, has been bribing me to afford him the means of making a new effort."

Egbert made no reply, but entering the cell, looked suspiciously round. Then, without offering comment on what he had heard, he retired, carefully inspecting the fastenings as he withdrew.

Thenceforward, when William de Broke came to the cell, he indulged the malignity of his heart by venting scornful taunts and bitter reproaches on the prisoner. He reviled him as a spy who sought but to betray the community of which he had desired to become a member, and never failed to wind up his insulting speech with the declaration that death would soon terminate for ever his projects for escaping.

Edmund seldom replied; but absorbed as he was in grief for the perils to which he knew Mariana must be exposed, he felt indignant at the active cruelty which the heartless mockeries of William incessantly pressed on his attention. One day his persecutor was enjoying the accustomed treat, when a thought occurred to the prisoner that it was in his power to chastise the outrages he had sustained, and this was promptly followed by another, that even more might be attempted. The paleness of sickness and despondency which had taken possession of a countenance recently the seat of florid health, convinced William de Broke that the dissolution of Edmund was rapidly approaching. He considered him to be much more enfeebled than he really was: and

great was his confusion, when he saw the supposed dying man spring forward, exerting strength which he was in no condition to resist. After an ineffectual struggle, he fell, and not till then did Edmund relax his hold. The first use which the prostrate monk made of the power of speech, now restored to him, was to implore mercy. Sad as Edmund was at heart, he could not but feel a momentary joy when this sound from the trembling lips of his persecutor vibrated on his ear.

"What!" he exclaimed, "canst thou call for mercy? I deemed thou hadst wholly forgotten the word: come what may, I shall never regret the work of this moment, which has so suddenly reduced the unfeeling tyrant to the condition of a suppliant."

Shame sat on the face of the terrified wretch, and rage glared in his faded eyes; but he made no effort to rise: he remembered the night when he had seen Edmund struggling in the vault with Egbert, and knowing that the life even of the abbot was menaced, he doubted not that his own would be in danger if he ventured to exasperate by reproach.

"Rise," said Edmund.

William obeyed in silence.

"Now doff thy cloak and hood."

"What would you? O spare me! I have already sufficiently felt your resentment."

"I would have your cloak and hood," said Edmund; "for in them I wish presently to pass from this accursed abode. My garment is damp and discoloured, from the vile confinement to which I have been subjected. Doff without delay."

William divested himself of his habit. In doing so he gradually approached the door of the dungeon.

"Not so far that way," cried Edmund: "I desire to stand between you and the outlet from the cell, since you must for a time be the prisoner instead of the jailer."

"O spare me!—the damp and fœtid vapours of these vaults I cannot brave, even for a few minutes, with impunity. To confine me here for any extended period would be to doom me to destruction."

"The lives of better men have been thus sacrificed, and though in your case destruction both of soul and body were inevitable, here should you remain."

"Nay, spare me!"

"Peace!"

"You are urged on by madness: it is impossible for you to find the way alone."

"I am urged on by despair; and for the way, though I know it not, you can direct me."

A momentary gleam of exultation illuminated the cadaverous visage of the monk; and he replied,—

"I will direct you."

"And see you speak truly. On my escape I know my life depends, and so perchance may yours: for if I fail, (I mean through any treacherous falsehood of yours,) then mark my words,—I am not without a weapon, and I will not perish alone."

While he spoke he displayed a knife, which he had secreted on the day preceding his attempt to escape. William shrunk back; and Edmund having attired himself in the garments of his persecutor, and received from him what he averred to be a true description of the path which he must take, left the cell, taking excellent care to secure the door.

CHAPTER XXV.

———vaine hope (which hope, sayth Euripides, destroyeth manye a man and cittye, driveth him on so farre, that he can never return backe.
ASCHAM.

FOR a moment Edmund hesitated whether or not to pass by the way which William had described. Recalling the solemn asseverations of the monk, and the shuddering alarm which he had inspired, he was disposed to believe that he had been told the truth.

Whatever the peril of going forward might be, it was quite clear that it could not be greater than that to which he must be exposed by remaining where he was. He had little time for deliberation, as it was probable that the continued absence of the monk would soon be noticed. If he decided to go forward, detection was probable, but it was absolutely certain if he hesitated.

Impressed with this conviction, he explored the narrow way which led from his cell. He soon reached a stone staircase, and remembering to have ascended steps when he

was conducted to his dungeon, he felt satisfied that he had not been deceived by William. Having passed down them, he saw two other flights of steps. Edmund was at a loss which of these to prefer; but reflecting that in his situation ill-timed caution was more to be feared than the wildest precipitation, he took that to which he first came; he saw an open door; it encouraged a hope that he was in the track which William had just pursued. He drew his cowl so as to shroud his face, and entered the apartment to which the door led. This was a circular Gothic room fitted up as a chapter-house, which had in former times been the place where the brotherhood assembled to deliberate on matters affecting the church in general, and those of their own order in particular. The ceiling was lofty, and divided by grooved arches, the points of which met in the centre. Light was admitted by a painted window, divided into three compartments, in which the Crucifixion was represented. The Saviour was in the centre; and on his right the penitent malefactor seemed about to expire, while an angel approached to take charge of his soul. On the left, the soul of the hardened sinner, just issuing from his mouth, was clasped by the talons of a hovering fiend. Beneath, a chair with an ascent of one step was placed, over which an enormously thick octagon sounding-board projected from the wall, in which benches to the right and left of the chair were fixed. In front of the seat prepared for the superior, and nearly in the centre of the room, stood a circular oaken table. It had twelve legs or supporters at equal distances from each other; each of which presented a carved representation of one of the apostles, and formed the side of a small pointed arch. No person was there; and the chapter house seemed to have been much neglected of late through the disorders in the monastery, which had superseded the ancient discipline. The dust had been suffered to accumulate, the rain had penetrated the roof, and the benches and chair appeared almost falling from long disuse, and want of repair.

Edmund glanced hastily at the apartment, and believed that he had mistaken the way; but reluctant to retrace his steps, on perceiving a door leading from the chapter, he determined on going wherever that might conduct him. He found himself in a small closet which seemed to be an ante-

room, or robing place to the chapter-house. By this he reached a passage through which he rapidly advanced, and now for the first time he heard voices. The sound of his own name struck on his ear, but he listened in vain for its repetition.

The passage was gloomy, but a ray of daylight at the further extremity announced that he approached the refectory. He had hitherto retained the lamp, but he now extinguished it, and placed it on the ground. He again advanced. Several monks were in the apartment through which he must of necessity pass. The moment of detection was perhaps at hand; but it was in vain to go back or to pause. He drew the cowl closer to conceal his features, and entered the room from which the voices proceeded.

"You have made long stay," said one of the monks, and Edmund recognised the voice of the brother who with William had secured him on the night when he made his first attempt to escape. He took no notice of the remark, but crossed towards the opposite door, when the same voice demanded,—

"What made you tarry? Did you find your charge dying, and anxious to be confessed before you left him?"

"No," said Edmund, in a tone little above a whisper.

"But why are you thus shrouded?" inquired the other. "What made this muffling needful?"

"Damp and cold," Edmund replied; and now, having gained the door, he stepped into the corridor. He passed the cell in which he had once reposed, and hastened forward without looking behind, when he saw a monk coming towards him, whose eyes were suspiciously fixed on him. Edmund quickened his pace; and, anxious to avert the inquiries to which he feared he might be subjected, he judged that it would be no bad policy to speak first. He accordingly demanded—

"Where is Father Egbert?"

"He is just gone forth."

"I must follow," he replied; and the suspicion of the monk, if he entertained any, set at rest by the manner in which he had been accosted, prompted no further speech.

Edmund had now reached the termination of the corridor, and was about descending the steps which led to the parlour, whence he hoped, by affecting eagerness to over-

take Father Egbert, to get to the porter's lodge, when he was challenged.

"Whither so fast, I pray?"

"Where is Father Egbert?"

"He passed but now; and is by this time gone forth."

"I must after him."

"You are too late. He is already gone, and you may not to the parlour while he is absent."

"But he may be there now. Heard you not his speech?"

This question Edmund put with a confident tone, in the hope of vanquishing opposition to his progress. The monk listened, but no sound was heard.

"There!" exclaimed Edmund: "heard you not again? You cannot be deaf?"

"By the mass!" cried the monk, "you are right."

Much did Edmund exult in the success of this artifice, and the faint hope which he had previously cherished now ripened into sanguine expectation. No fear remained, when the monk added—

"Go on: I hear him distinctly."

In the midst of the anxiety by which his mind was torn, Edmund could not but smile at the positive manner in which the person he sought to deceive averred that he distinguished the voice of one who must at that moment be at a considerable distance from the monastery. He was about to profit from the supposed successful effort at deception, when he most distinctly heard the voice of Father Egbert. At this well-known sound he involuntarily shrunk back, with an expression of confusion and dismay.

"Pass forward," said the brother who had detained him: "he has returned for something that has been forgotten. You are in time."

"I too have forgotten what I ought to have remembered, and will return," he replied, in a low hurried tone, expecting even while he spoke to be recognized.

He turned to retrace his steps. But again to pass unnoticed, or undiscovered, was in his judgment almost impossible; and if he could accomplish it, the prospect of escape would be as remote as ever.

Egbert was now in the corridor. Edmund perceived that his suspicious glance already rested on him, and attempted to retreat.

"Whither speed ye, William?" cried the abbot, who recognized the habit, and, as he thought, the figure of William de Broke.

Affecting not to hear him, Edmund walked away, without venturing to answer.

"Why sought you me?" the latter demanded. "For what did you desire to follow me?"

"It boots not now," said Edmund, constrained to risk an answer. He spoke in a low tone, as before, and in a voice not unlike, so he persuaded himself, to that of William.

But the first sound that fell from his lips startled Egbert, whose curiosity had been excited by the manner in which Edmund strove to avoid him.

"Hold!" he exclaimed, in an authoritative tone: "that hood may be prudently drawn close around thy visage when abroad, but such precaution is here more than is needful; therefore remove it straight."

He waited not for compliance with this mandate, but withdrew the cowl himself, and at once saw that he had not experienced a vain alarm.

"Wretch!" thundered Egbert, "thou art again defeated. By what base artifice of thine, or treacherous connivance of another, do I find thee here?"

"You find me here," Edmund replied, "from having rendered me desperate enough by your villainy to attempt any thing, that could by possibility lead to an escape.

Egbert turned pale with rage, while he reflected how nearly his captive had succeeded in regaining his liberty.

"And who—who," said he, "is the traitor by whose perfidious aid you are enabled to make these repeated attempts? Who is your accomplice?"

"I have none."

"That is incredible. You could not have been here had not some accomplice favoured your endeavours to pass from the monastery."

"Whatever has been done this day has been done without voluntary aid from any one, as you will soon know."

"Secure our common enemy," cried Egbert to the monks, whom the sound of his voice had brought to the spot.

The order was promptly obeyed. Edmund expected nothing less; but he shrank back with disgust and indigna-

tion, when he found that the foremost to assist in seizing him was no other than his former friend Nicholas Bray.

Edmund was re-conducted to the cell from which he had fled. The door was opened, and William saw with exultation the prisoner returned to his dungeon. Savage joy gave unwonted brightness to his faded eye, while in the fulness of his satisfaction he triumphantly demanded,—

"Well, my gay gallant, have you enjoyed the same fool's chase on which but now you were so intent? Trust me, I began to think you long, and joy to see you at last return."

"Peace, villain!" said Edmund, without deigning to look on him.

"You will now," resumed William, "perhaps have no objection to give back my habit, since your old one, seeing you are not going abroad, may serve for your wear in this blythe abode."

While speaking, William observed not that he sustained the stern inquiring regards of the abbot. He looked round, to catch the malignant smile which he calculated his heartless taunts would not fail to call forth, when he saw with surpriso, though with little apprehension, the angry scowl of Egbert, whose voice was now raised to address him.

"Peradventure, it may be well," he said, "that instead of trifling with him, you prepare to answer me. How has it chanced, that the offender confided to your care, has passed from that strict confinement to which he was destined?"

William recounted the manner of Edmund's flight, exaggerating somewhat in the description which he gave of his own efforts to oppose him.

"This tale," said Egbert, "may to some appear to be the very truth; but for me I scruple not to say I hold it to be utterly incredible."

The languid visage of William was distorted with emotion, which extended to his whole frame, at finding that the narration which he had given was not credited.

"What?" he wildly inquired. "Can it be thought that I would from choice become the inhabitant of this place, to liberate another?"

"Wily as you are known to be, it is little likely that you should so far forget the rules of common prudence, as to place yourself in a prisoner's power."

"I thought—I expected not—"

"Had this been so, it is still little likely that, brought hither as this same refractory stripling was, blinded and through circuitous ways, he could have passed to where it was my hap to find him, without direction from you."

A murmur of assent to this remark escaped from the brethen who were present. Egbert preceeded :—

"When it is seen that Edmund has passed through paths which were not known to him before; when I behold him attired in your garment, and find you clad in his; he endeavouring to make his way through the monastery, you quietly remaining in his prison; to what conclusion can I come but this, that you are his accomplice ?"

Amazement and agonising terror almost withdrew from the accused wretch the power of uttering a single word. He looked on the abbot while he spoke with a disordered vacant stare, but faltered when he would have replied, in a manner which his examiners concluded must proceed from inability to give a satisfactory reply. On this Egbert commented :—

"You seek in vain for a plausible excuse; and when I further bethink me of the conversation which I partially heard on a former day between you and the prisoner, doubt can scarcely choose but give way to certainty—to the certainty of your being a traitor. Therefore, since you have chosen this abode for yourself, even remain in it till you can give some proof that you have not acted the part I believe you to have acted."

"Nay, hear me," cried William, shuddering at the idea of seeing the dungeon-door closed on him a second time, and of being confined with Edmund.

"You will be heard ere long," replied Egbert; "for into this business inquiry shall speedily be made. In the mean time, here you must tarry, to plan, if such your pleasure, some means of enabling a treacherous offender to go forth to the world which he pretended to forswear."

While speaking, he withdrew: William attempted to follow, but the interposing door prevented him; and, regardless of his vehement asseverations of innocence, and frantic supplications for mercy, he was again left in that dungeon which he had so often visited for the purpose of mocking the sorrows of his fellow-prisoner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

———the chilling ice of death
Congeals my blood, and chokes the stream of breath.
FALCONER.

A VARIETY of circumstances tended to produce the conviction in the mind of Egbert, that William had connived at the attempted escape. The alarm which he had experienced from the singular language of Ferdinand, made a deep impression on his mind; and though he subsequently dismissed his suspicions with his fears, the way was left so open for their return, that the slightest circumstance was capable of reviving them. The conversation between William and Edmund, which he had partially overheard, seemed to warrant the idea that the former was disposed to negociate. The difficulties Edmund had actually surmounted were such as he did not believe he could conquer without aid; and the splendid promises which he could make, with a prospect of their being realized, were certainly more than sufficient to inflame the cupidity of William de Broke.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the next thing to be considered was the way in which it might be proper to dispose of the offender, so as effectually to withdraw from him the means of being dangerous, without alarming others for their own safety. His arbitrary will had sent Edmund to a dungeon; but it was necessary to use more ceremony with a monk who stood in the situation of William. Edmund had from the first been viewed with alarm: the sincerity of his piety threatened an exposure of the profligacy of the monks, and all were rejoiced when the decisive step of making him a prisoner was decided upon. Egbert feared, that if of himself he took the same course in the present case, it might be viewed with jealousy. He therefore was anxious that the punishment to be inflicted on William should be the act of the fraternity, and with that object he determined on forthwith holding a chapter.

A few hours sufficed for completing the necessary preparation. The abbot's chair and the table were covered with black cloth, the benches were hastily fitted up with matting, and the same material was spread over the damp marble pavement. The whole of the brethren being required

to attend, the accused was brought before them with as much solemnity as if the ancient rules of the order had never been violated or forgotten, and as if it were determined to uphold the principles on whieh the institution had been founded, in all their original purity.

Egbert called on the assembly to give the case their most careful consideration. He recalled to their recollection the circumstances of suspicion which appeared against the supposed offender. He expatiated with eloquence on the enormity of the treason which laboured to give freedom to a malcontent, whose representations to those in power would be likely to withdraw from them all the advantages of which they had hitherto been in secure possession, and effect the annihilation of the order itself. He finally left it for them to resolve, after hearing what might be offered in extenuation or defence, whether guilt was proved, and if this was established, to determine what punishment ought to be awarded against their common foe.

William vindicated himself by referring to his general course of life, which certainly was not such as to warrant any violent suspicion of humanity. He further directed their attention to the exultation which he had manifested on seeing Edmund brought back to the dungeon, and, finally, desired them to appeal to the prisoner himself, and judge from the answers he might give, whether he had received any aid from him.

To this Egbert replied, that he much deceived himself if he judged that the chapter were to be imposed upon by a ridiculous tale of affected joy, acted to avert inquiry, when he found that the plan which he had abetted had failed. That his general career had not been marked by extraordinary benevolence afforded no presumption that he was not open to the influence of avarice; but since he wished that Edmund should be called before the chapter, as his examination might in some way elicit the truth, there could be no objection to that, though what he might state ought to be listened to with extreme caution.

The dungeon door was again opened for Edmund to pass forth, and he soon found himself in that apartment which he had entered in the morning, and which he had little dreamed he should so soon see restored to its ancient use, or something resembling it, in form. Nicholas Bray was

one of those who attended him from the cell to the chapter. On the way he found an opportunity of whispering the purpose for which Edmund was wanted, and added,—

"Now make the catiff smart. If he refused to aid you, swear all was done by his assistance, and be revenged."

Edmund heeded not this admonition. Interrogated by Egbert, he answered the questions which were asked without any reference to the persecution which he had sustained, and consequently his replies tended to the exculpation of the accused.

"But say," cried Egbert, "if he did not plan your escape, did he not solace your confinement, with conversation or otherwise?"

"He did not."

"Has he never conversed with you?"

"He has."

"And to what purpose?"

"Evidently but with a view of torturing a wounded spirit, and of exulting over calamity."

"Did he in no instance deviate into kindness?"

"Never, but to mock the credulity which listened to him, and to crush the hope which he inspired."

"Hope, then," said Egbert, "he did inspire?"

"He did, by affecting to listen to the entreaties I preferred, that he might afterwards insult the weakness of one who supposed him to possess the feelings of a man."

The features of William were lighted up with exultation, while answers according so well both with the truth, and with what he wished to hear stated, were given by the witness. Egbert proceeded;—

"Then it is your intent here to declare, that he in nowise aided your views, or consented to your flight?"

"This I aver. If no other charge can be preferred against him, by my soul, he is innocent."

"And this you can fearlessly state as the truth?"

"I can. If to have a heart of flint be virtue, there exists not under heaven a more perfect being than William de Broke."

"You speak decisively."

"And feel as I speak. If you want a villain whose soul is impervious to mercy or compassion, cherish William as an invaluable treasure."

"Remember you have promised to speak veritably."

"I have not forgotten my promise, nor am fearful of violating it, when I again declare, that where a reckless callous wretch is of value, this miscreant is above all price. The rage that stabs with sudden fury is gentle and benevolent, when compared with the serene cruelty, and cold-blooded barbarity of him who has been so unjustly suspected of pity."

Edmund was then removed: Bray attended him to his dungeon. They were not alone, but he again found an opportunity of speaking without being observed.

"We are undone. Your mad-headed love of truth has saved the miscreant you might have destroyed. Truth is a marvellous good thing, but it is not for all times."

Edmund made no reply, but entered his prison in silence.

The chapter proceeded to decide on the case before them.

Foolish as it might appear to Nicholas Bray for Edmund to answer as he did, and fortunate as William de Broke was inclined to consider himself in finding a witness so much to his purpose, what was stated did not make on the tribunal he had faced exactly that impression on which he and the jester calculated. Though William, conscious that Edmund had spoken no more than the truth, anticipated instantaneous acquittal, Egbert took a very different view of the subject. Accustomed to every species of hypocrisy himself, he was satisfied that anything but a correct representation of William's conduct had been given by Edmund; and in the warmth with which the obduracy of William had been described, he thought he saw an artful attempt to save an accomplice, that he might continue to command his services. His wish he communicated to the other members, of the chapter, and they, unwilling to be outdone in sagacity by their principal, were not slow in agreeing that the energy with which Edmund had spoken, in reprobation of his jailer, marked an anxious desire that he should not be changed; and notwithstanding all the protestations which William could make of his being perfectly guiltless of mercy, it was unanimously decided that he had lent himself to procure the enlargement of the prisoner.

It was in vain that the tear of anguish stole from the sunken eye of William, while thus unjustly condemned, he trembled before his indignant judges. His punishment was

soon determined. Since he had been convicted of desiring to set free one whom it was the interest of the brotherhood to detain, the most fitting punishment seemed that to which he had been temporarily sentenced by Egbert; and it was ordered that he should forthwith be returned to the society of his supposed accomplice.

This decision was promptly carried into execution; and the frantic, despairing monk again became the companion of Edmund. It was no amelioration of the condition of the latter to be accommodated with such society. Though it was impossible for him not to be struck with the manner in which the brutality of the monk had been requited, by him to whom it was likely to prove most acceptable, the dungeon became more loathsome when encumbered with his presence. The bosom of Edmund was too much torn by apprehension for Mariana, to be capable of enjoying the luxury of vengeance.

For William, remembering how he had rejoiced in the sufferings of another, he expected to meet with the scornful reproaches of his companion, if not with greater outrage. While Edmund, occupied with his own griefs, paced the cell, the eyes of his late persecutor watched his steps with indescribable dread. He would fain have concealed himself, but the dungeon presented no recess in which he could bestow his wretched form, to escape for an instant the observation of his fellow-sufferer.

Egbert supplied his victims with a newly replenished lamp on each succeeding day. The bringer of it entered with his cowl so closely drawn over his face, that, with the exception of his eyes, no feature was visible to those whom he attended. Having deposited the lamp on the table, he placed by the side of it the scanty supply of food, and the water, which vindictive cruelty had not yet resolved to withhold. One person entered, but the footsteps of one, or more than one, might be heard without. On withdrawing, the monk carried with him the lamp which had expired, or which was nearly exhausted, and the sound of his voice was never heard. Though assailed by the importunate supplications of William, he on no occasion broke silence; and when the almost frantic wretch prostrated himself before him to implore his good offices with father Egbert, it produced no effect, and he appeared only solicitous to gain the door without delay.

The agitation of William's mind co-operating with the chilly and loathsome vapours of the dungeon, and acting on a constitution before impaired by sickness, inflamed the malady under which he laboured, and, shuddering with horror at the idea, he already believed that the hand of death was upon him. Having fallen from virtue, he had gloried in infidelity; and, while persuaded that the hour of his dissolution was still remote, he delighted to treat the mysteries of the faith he professed with blasphemous derision. In addition to the other resources of misery which he had now to deplore, the recollection of this came over him, and wrought disease to madness. Either the light of truth beamed awful conviction on the heart which before could doubt, or the enfeebled mind was open to delusions against which it could once protect itself; for the boasted reason, lately the pride of William de Broke, could not sustain his courage in those sad hours which he believed, and felt, were among the last which he should number on earth.

"You are revenged," he exclaimed to Edmund. "In this hideous place I cannot survive. Why do you not exult in my fall?"

"The part you acted was a base one," Edmund replied; "but, though in your fate I recognise the expiation demanded by a just Providence, I cannot exult—I cannot mock your sufferings, as you did mine."

"You need not. My own thoughts become tormenting fiends. They torture me to madness, and unite with disease to hurry me to perdition."

"It would be wise rather to indulge hopes of mercy. Doomed with myself to inevitable death—"

"How say you," interrupted William; "is death inevitable?"

"I think so for both. But it is absolutely certain that you, if not immediately relieved, must perish ere many days are fled."

The wretched William, while mourning that death was at hand, had hoped to hear from his companion that the danger was less imminent than he had suspected. The dismal confirmation of his worst fears argumented his agitation, and diminished the chances of surviving which had previously existed. Now he attempted to supplicate the mercy of his long-forgotten Creator, but the mind, enthralled with

earthly objects, in vain attempted to soar from the recollection of the guilty past, and the contemplation of the appalling present, to solicit mercy for the never-ending future. He abandoned the effort in despair. The idea of an indulgent Creator, prepared to welcome home the returning spirit with pardon and reward, occurred not to him: he thought but of a God of justice advancing in terrible array against the being who had perseveringly abused the existence lent to him, by scorn for his Maker, and hatred for his fellow-creatures. His eyeballs glared on imagined spectres of hideous aspect, which waited to receive the fleeting soul, and the dungeon resounded with exclamations of horror, and shrieks of anguish.

From being an object of abhorrence, the sufferer became one of pity. But the efforts of Edmund to soothe, served only to augment the destroying fever which consumed the wretch. To meet with compassion where he merited execration, made recollected guilt appear to the troubled conscience of deeper dye than before, and convulsive starts and appalling throes hurried the miserable sinner to the verge of existence. Edmund surveyed with awe the last struggles of hopeless remorse, and bent over the convulsed sufferer, anxious to render any assistance which, circumstanced as he was, it might be practicable to afford.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I've been surprised in an unguarded hour,
But must not now go back: the love that lay
Half smothered in my breast has broke through all
Its weak restraints.

ADDISON.

THOUGH the cloisters of the convent Mariana loved to wander alone. The gloom which prevailed was not so deep as to startle, but it was such as to invite solemn reflection, to which she wished with sincerity to bend her spirit. Here she often walked for hours, and perusing the monumental records which adorned the walls, felt soothed by the proofs they afforded, that grief, however acute, was but temporary,

and that Heaven, when least kind to mortals, doomed them to know but a brief date of sorrow.

She was thus occupied one day when a loud burst of laughter from the chapel at the extremity of the *double cloister* called off her attention from the objects by which it had been previously engrossed. It caused surprise to hear the sound of mirth in such a place; but that surprise was not a little increased when she saw the prioress and a nun issue from it, still laughing with unrestrained gaiety.

Their merriment was suspended on perceiving Mariana, whom they now approached. The prioress perceived her amazement.

"You seem confounded, sister Mariana," she remarked, "to find that laughter can obtain place in a religious establishment."

"The sound attracted my attention," said Mariana, "as somewhat unusual."

"But which may become familiar to you, if you are not cruel to yourself."

"That, madam, I fear is impossible. Laughter cannot restore a dear relation, and—"

"And a still dearer lover, you would have added, if your candour or courage had not failed you. That may be true; but tolerable substitutes may be discovered to console the sorrowing vestal for both."

"Aye, madam, for hearts that know their duty, and which, trained to devotion in looking forward to future bliss, have already commenced their heaven on earth."

The prioress and the nun, her companion, looked at each other, and apparently found some difficulty in abstaining from a new fit of laughter. The superior, however, recovered the government of her countenance, and having subdued the insurrectionary mirth of her features, she spoke.

"Step you into the house, Catherine: I shall remain here awhile to bestow a little spiritual consolation on our young friend."

The nun laughed while the prioress spoke, and retired.

Mariana was not prepared to witness such levity, and her inquiring eyes were directed towards the prioress, soliciting information. She did not wait long for it.

"Child!" said the prioress, "you still dare scarcely credit the evidence of your senses, so great is the wonder

which has seized you at finding that all is not solemnity and gloom, as you had been led to fear, within these walls;—but I told you, when you first came, that unexpected comfort might await you. You honestly avowed that you came not here from choice."

"I indeed must acknowledge that my feeble capacity never enabled me to comprehend the advantages of seclusion, so as to make me content to quit the world."

"And trust me," returned the superior, with that winning air of kind assent which rarely fails to inspire confidence in the youthful mind, "your case was mine. I saw the world in my youth, and loved its pleasures; these I regarded as the present bounty of the Creator, and could not persuade myself that it was virtue,—it rather seemed like insolent ingratitude, to spurn and affect to despise them."

"Indeed! Were such ideas ever yours?"

"Such, also, I may own it now, mine have been;—but I feared to dwell on the thought, much less to give it speech."

"We are told that higher joys are prepared for us in another state; but these we cannot taste till we become superior to what we are now. To reject the pleasures which belong to our present condition, in contemplation of what may be ours hereafter, is in my judgment not less ridiculous than it would be to refuse the common aliment of mortals, from an over-anxious desire to gain the celestial nourishment, which the fabled nectar of the gods may be supposed to yield."

"I, madam, though I have anxiously striven to instruct myself better, have still reluctantly approached the conclusion, that to relinquish the comforts of life could not be needful where these might be enjoyed remote from sinful thoughts, and idle pleasures."

"Pleasures may be forbidden, and yet they may be such that it cannot be sinful to court them. Those objects which yield gratification it is natural for us to covet: we must of necessity do so; and the thirst of these must have been designedly implanted in us by the Author of our creation."

This reasoning was new to Mariana. The prioress was the last person on earth from whom she had expected it. Accustomed to hear how prone the Deity was to be moved to wrath by the unholy anxiety of mortals for terrestrial

enjoyments, she trembled at the boldness which set at nought what she had regarded as the fundamental principle of religion; she had, indeed, found it impossible to subscribe to it so cordially as she had wished; but it startled her to hear thoughts, she had trembled to indulge even for an instant, fearlessly avowed and defended.

The prioress marked the effect produced by her words; but it was too late to dissemble, and she resolved on going on to convince Mariana of the propriety of that which she appeared disposed to question.

"I say," she continued, "that we can only desire what Heaven teaches is befitting our station here; and if it be sinful to cherish such desires, it is criminal to breathe."

Mariana offered no reply.

"Dismiss," said the prioress, "those idle misgivings which it is the business of interested relations to inspire, that we, being denied all that makes life of value, the more may remain open to them. He who destined you to a convent, has not, I believe, designed to become monk or hermit himself."

"I know not that he has, madam; but I know that his affection for me was most sincere. It was his love that placed me here."

"So he pretended."

"So I know, for so he told me; and he would never stoop to falsehood."

"It may be that you are deceived. But I think you have not scrupled to acknowledge that you had a lover?"

"There was one, who, not less anxious for my welfare than my uncle, looked on me with even more of tenderness, and would fain have been my protector through life. I—"

"Would fain have seen him gratified in this."

"To have known him blest would have been the dearest joy on earth my heart could taste; but I will confess, if one especially selfish thought was ever known to me, it was the wish that his society might be the solace of my future years."

"And would nought suffice but his?"

"Madam?"

"Was he the only man whose society could cheer your heart?"

"The presence of my uncle I have ever coveted."

"But I speak of a lover. Have you seen but one in that character whose converse might cheer you?"

"But one, madam; nor would I see another."

"Child, you know not yourself. You love him of whom you have spoken, because on him your attention was particularly fixed. But nature has happily fashioned woman's heart on a less exclusive plan than the giddy girl enamoured of her first admirer can suppose. This you shall shortly prove."

"I understand not—"

"I know that explanation must be needful, and will supply it. You fairly confessed yourself sad at heart, when brought here to consume a life, which may be long, in kneeling before crosses, counting beads, and performing the other conventual exercises. Others have felt the same grief before you, and, devising measures for their own relief, have done what may relieve you from the irksome dulness in which you anticipated your days would pass."

"I comprehend not, holy madam, to what your speech refers. From the exercises of a convent I never shrunk, but because to reside where these are used I must have to deplore the loss of friends to whom I had become attached."

"But, my fair sister, other attachments may be formed. And here, even here, where churlish relations would doom the vestal to rigid observances, and joyless solitude, those may gain admittance who will snatch the devoted from lonely wretchedness."

Mariana was confused: she doubted her own capacity, and looked anxiously on the prioress, as expecting some elucidation.

"the news which I communicate," said the prioress, "seems to overwhelm you; but question not its truth: you may yet see a lover at your feet."

"Alas, madam!"

"Nay, spare the childish declaration you contemplate: you would tell me that one, one alone, could be welcome; but reflect—before he was seen you dreamed not of his existence, and another, not less accomplished, may yet be found, reluctant as you are to deem this possible."

"Madam, I would fain hope that I misunderstand you."

"Why this foolish bashfulness? Have you not avowed your hatred of the life of a nun? After this can you affect

disgust when I announce to you, that, though withdrawn from the world, its pleasures may follow you to a convent?"

"I did think that the world might be seen and enjoyed without that risk of awful punishment which my uncle taught was ever to be expected, but I did not therefore suppose that—"

"How!" cried the prioress, hastily interrupting, while her eyes glistened with more than ordinary brightness, "have you invited confidence, to betray it? Are you thus artful?"

"I have employed no art."

"Have you not listened to my speech with seeming joy? Did not your every look proclaim that you were shocked at a convent's gloom; terrified at the bare thought of its expected rigour? Yet now, when kindness would remove your dread, you answer with cold caution, and disdainful glances."

"I have till this hour listened to you, madam, with unfeigned satisfaction, because your voice never failed to breathe comfort and to utter words of kindness: I have trembled to lead the life of a nun, because I feared my heart would be slow to yield the wished-for zeal in the discharge of its duties. For this, and for other causes, not now to be explained, I have been depressed, and thought my lot hard; but I shrink with tenfold horror from the degrading and impious consolation of which you would seem the advocate."

"Degrading! Impious! Are these the terms applied to language of mine?"

"These are the terms, madam, which I must apply to depravity like that which would profane an institution dedicated to religion."

Mariana spoke with firmness, and the prioress, to whom her speech was addressed, stood amazed at the energy which she witnessed, and at her own misconception of the character of the sister who feared not thus resolutely to condemn what had been suggested; but wrath soon triumphed so far over astonishment, as to give utterance to the indignant feelings which unexpected reproof had called forth.

"Thou declaimest well," she said; "but mark me, it is not well that thou shouldest thus declaim. Thou hast perfidiously drawn me on to unbosom myself, and now thou

knowest me as I am. The veil has been withdrawn, and cannot be resumed: take the consequences."

"What mean you, madam?"

"My meaning shall not long be questionable. In me you see no timid calculating wretch, but the determined votary of pleasure. Call me sinner if you will, I am woman. Torn from delicious life, in repining youth, it was here that an unfeeling parent destined me to sigh. Devotion invited me to heaven, but passion chained me to earth; and still my soul clings to the happiness which it has not feared to know."

"I am shocked beyond expression! You, madam, must shape your conduct as you will; but for me, I cannot, nay, much as my peremptory tone may offend, I *will* not be the partner of your course."

"Indeed! This is resolutely said; but unless you have power to force these walls you *shall*."

"O, madam!—in mercy forbear!"

"It is too late: you know too much of my history to be left in a state to tell your own without a blush. The king has already dissolved many religious houses, and none can tell which next will share the same fate. Should he so deal with the convent of St. Helen, never think that it shall be yours serenely to recount what you know to my prejudice. Whatever ill may befal me, at least your spotless insolence shall not survive to taunt my shame."

With these words the abbess hastily re-entered the chapel, while Mariana, confounded and dismayed, remained leaning against the shaft of one of the pillars which supported the pointed arches of the cloister. She trembled to recal the scene which had just closed; but with respect to that which was yet to open, and to which the threat of the prioress referred, a wide field was left for dismal conjecture. Death by violence seemed the least of the evils which she had to dread.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The gentleman is learn'd, and a most rare speaker,
To nature none more bound; his training such,
That he may furnish and instruct great teachers,
And never seek for aid out of himself.

SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH Lord Erpingham was anxious to employ what remained of his life in the service of his country, he was not ambitious of the honours of office; and the invitation which he had received, and which he regarded as a summons to appear before the king, while it moved his curiosity, neither excited his hopes nor flattered his vanity.

In truth, when the hour drew near, he would gladly have declined going. Though no monarch that ever filled the British throne could be more popular than Henry was, at different periods of his reign, many of his acts were so odious and tyrannical, that it was impossible for good men to approve of them. As the Reform advanced, those who favoured it, lauded him to the skies, for setting the Pope at defiance, and for putting down monastic establishments, in some of which great disorders unquestionably prevailed; and the exaggerated reports which gained currency with the multitude on this subject, induced a belief that all were disgraced by crimes the most foul.

But while tearing the veil from sanctified impostors, and punishing ascertained crime, Henry was not sufficiently careful to guard against oppressing the pious adherents of that ecclesiastical power which it had once been his glory to defend. Zeal seldom accomplishes the reform which necessity demands, without going further: thus it was at the period to which our narrative has now arrived; and not content with exposing the deceptions by which divers interested persons had been in the habit of imposing on the credulous, the most virtuous characters in the land, if they rigidly adhered to the faith in which they had been educated, were in many instances, pursued with deadly hostility as factious partisans of the Bishop of Rome, as it had now become fashionable to call the Pope.

Lord Erpingham shared the sentiments of Sir Thomas More; and doing so, after the catastrophe which prema-

turely deprived the world of that great man, he could not view the acts of the King in the most favourable light. But his loyalty remained firm; and anxious to feel that regard for the sovereign which others never ceased to express, he endeavoured to persuade himself that actions not in accordance with the goodness of heart for which he had formerly given his royal master credit, were in truth not his own, but those of evil counsellors.

It was to one of the serjeants' feasts, at Ely House, that Lord Erpingham was bidden. The hour of supper, for it was a supper which was expected to be graced with the royal presence, was six in the afternoon.

He had mounted his horse, and, attended by one domestic, was in the act of leaving Fickett's fields, when a stranger called to him,—

"Tarry awhile, my Lord Erpingham, for I would have conference with you."

The peer looked with some surprise at the man who had thus accosted him. His wretched habiliments were singularly at variance with the authoritative tone in which he had spoken, and the dignified deportment which he laboured to assume.

"Tarry, my lord," he again called out; "for I am commissioned to negociate with you on divers matters of importance."

The lofty speech and vulgar carriage of the man presented a most ludicrous combination; and Lord Erpingham, though little accustomed to jest, could not refrain from answering him lightly.

"I judge, knave" he said, "the negociation which you desire to enter upon, must have some relation to the buttery; wherefore, seeing I have no time to examine credentials, and settle bases with you, even pass thither at once, and you shall be fed."

"That which you have commissioned me to do, I shall punctually execute."

"I have confidence in thy promise," said Lord Erpingham, and would have moved forward, when the voice of the tattered ambassador detained him a moment longer, as he now called to him.

"But more shall I require than food: it is therefore I would have thee dismount straight, and think me not the

humble common sort of man I appear, if judged by the aspect of my garments."

"If you are not sporting," said Lord Erpingham, "tell me, and in one word—what you are."

"An Earl."

The surprise which this speech occasioned was turned to a new object; and Lord Erpingham, with some sternness, demanded of his servant, who had suddenly indulged in a fit of ungovernable laughter, what had so powerfully moved him.

"O! the varlet tells truth," the man replied: "he is what he names himself, he is the earl—" Here he was unable to speak, from the effect produced on his risible muscles, till the peer relieved him from the inconvenient impediment to utterance by the angry cry and commanding voice of reproof.

"Cease fooling. Who is this man? What is he called?"

"So please your lordship's honour, I saw him lately, when I was in—" "What is he called?" "*The Earl of Poverty.*"

This title had not become so generally known then as it was shortly afterwards. Lord Erpingham, displeased at being thus trifled with, deigned to make no reply; and spurring his horse forward, he passed through Jackanapes-lane, and towards Holborn, without paying the slightest regard to the repeated calls of the Earl of Poverty.

Though day had not yet closed, Lord Erpingham, as a mark of respect, was received at Ely House by ten domestics bearing lighted torches.

The curious crowd in front of the building was too great to be penetrated without difficulty, and several from among the multitude passed into the court-yard with him. These, all but one, were presently expelled: but the last that remained called to Lord Erpingham, and prayed that he would speak in his behalf, as he, besides having been long employed by Lord Erpingham as a tradesman, claimed indulgence, seeing the occasion which had brought the peer there was one of no ordinary interest to the speaker.

"Lord Erpingham recognized in the person by whom he was thus solicited a respectable goldsmith.

"I know you are," said he, "what you represent yourself to be; but what so peculiarly interests you in the coming pageant?"

"Let it please your lordship to know, I am the maker of the coat which the King's majesty designs to wear at the banquet."

"How!" exclaimed his lordship; "have you quitted your former calling to become a cutter out of cloths?"

"Not so; but your lordship shall be informed, that the coat which the King hath by this put on, is only prepared in its most incomplete state by the tailor. To work in the gold and the jewels which must adorn it is the business of the goldsmith; and I am most solicitous to observe how this, my most laboured effort, shall appear by torchlight."

"I have so little to do with courtly splendour, that I had forgotten that it was no unusual thing for a goldsmith to assist in making a garment."

His Lordship spoke in behalf of the citizen, who was suffered to remain. The peer was entering the palace, when a loud cry of "New torches" heard from a hundred voices announced the King's near approach; and a discharge of cannon, placed in the courtyard for that purpose, made it known that his majesty had actually arrived.

Though the former torches had not long been kindled, they were promptly thrown aside, and twenty new ones lighted, this being regarded as a point of *etiquette*, in honour of the royal visitor, which must in no case be omitted. He was received by the learned persons, whose advancement was the cause of the series of festivals then in course of being given, with acknowledgments for his royal condescension. His reply was marked by the dignity of a monarch, and the apparent frankness and cordiality of an equal. A description of Henry would here be superfluous, as perhaps no distinguished personage of former days has had the fortune to have correct and concurring representations of his face and figure made so familiar with all classes in the several ages which have elapsed since he lived; this, however, may be remarked, that when disposed to be gracious, nothing could be more happily blended, than the elegance of the courtier, and the blunt, or as some would call it, the John Bull-like good humour which he was wont to display.

His dress was most splendid; and the coat which the goldsmith had been so anxious to see on his royal customer reflected no discredit on his art. It was of crimson velvet, fitting somewhat loosely. The sleeves were slashed, the open parts being lined with cloth of gold. The breast was also

decorated with flowers of flatted gold of damask, buttons and loops of the same, and studded with rubies and pearls, bestowed in such profusion, that but little of the velvet remained uncovered. The *bases*, or skirts, were lined with white satin; and the border of this costly garment presented a superb specimen of embroidery.

In the midst of the bustle which prevailed while the King was being ushered into the grand hall, Lord Erpingham was not overlooked. Henry was pleased to compliment him, by reproof for absenting himself from court, where, in order that he might continue to reign as might become a British king, in triumph and in glory, he said he evermore desired to see the wisest men of his realm, among whom he accounted Lord Erpingham to be one. Henry thus condescended, while a *mummery* was in progress, in which his own resemblance paraded the room, honoured as the greatest of the nine worthies, among whom were Alfred, Alexander the Great, and King Solomon.

The hall was a venerable and spacious apartment: it was more than seventy feet in length. The six Gothic trefoil windows which lighted it by day were now concealed from view by cloth of gold, on which the white and red roses of the once hostile, but at length united, houses of York and Lancaster, were tastefully disposed. Chairs, with padded backs, covered with ancient tapestry, were placed on each side of the upper end of the table, and forms continued the line to the extremity of the hall. At the head of the table a chair, elegantly hung with purple velvet, was placed for the King, surmounted by a royal canopy or cloth of estate; behind this the authors of the feast took their stations in dutiful attendance, till his Majesty, affably dispensing with their services, commanded all present to be seated.

The Warner "by for the first course" was then introduced. This was a magnificent castle in paste. Its towers were crowned with flowers; warriors and saints were mingled for its protection. Here again Henry found his own likeness: the King, represented in his robes of state, acting under the immediate influence of the *Holy Ghost*, which in the form of a dove hovered near him, made hopeless all attempts on a fortress so defended. It were vain to enlarge on the "Sheldes of brawne in armor," "Frumetye with vension, "Capons of high goe," "Pik in Latymer sawce," "Kid re-

versed," "Perche in jelaye," "Peacock in hakell," "Red shankes," "Larks ingrailed," and the numerous other obsolete delicacies under which the festive board groaned, while the trumpets sounded, and the numerous company regaled in dazzling profusion.

Lord Erpingham gazed with interest on the hilarity around him, and derived pleasure from witnessing joy which he did not share. He recalled that period of his life, when in such a scene he could have laughed with the gayest, and pondered with sadness on the coming days, in which those whom he then saw living but to renew convivial delights should be depressed like himself, and only consoled by the prospect of that removal, which as yet they could ill endure to contemplate. Then he gazed on the cloudless brow of Henry, and much he marvelled that one, who, if he had not committed the crimes with which Lord Erpingham could not help mentally charging the monarch, had sanctioned measures which no sense of duty could make other than painful to a humane mind, should be so calm and cheerful. But melancholy seemed not to approach Henry: the bold flush of joy was on his cheek, laughter glistened in his eye; and if the indications of a heart at ease could be received as proof of a conscience free from reproach, no saint could be more blameless than the King of England.

"Right glad am I," said the monarch, "to find myself once more in such goodly company; and never trust me, but you, my Lord Erpingham, are of those I most desired to greet. But methinks, though the remark be unseemly, your hue is somewhat faded."

"Time, your highness knows, will not spare even kings; who then shall marvel, that one so humble as I am should make show of sickness, and of the ghastly aspect of age."

"Nay, my lord, you overrun the mark: I hope yet to profit largely by your wisdom, ere Age has called you his. But living in retirement, and inhabiting a salubrious spot, questionless selected by the learned brethren of those civilians who now surround us from its so blithely combining the advantages of town and country, I looked to see you in more robust health."

"Your Grace is most condescending: I complain of no serious malady."

"I learned, for often have I asked news of Lord Erping-

ham, that you had quite recovered from the arrow-wound you received two years past, through the carelessness of the students while shooting in Fickett's fields."

To this circumstance it is probable the King averted for the purpose of introducing some remark on the measures which had been adopted to repress an evil, once very prevalent in the neighbourhood of Holborn. Young men, and especially law-students, had been much accustomed to exercise themselves in archery, near the several inns, by shooting rabbits, which abounded in the adjacent meadows. The practice, as the business and population of the metropolis increased, became a formidable nuisance, which it had become absolutely necessary to put down by act of parliament.

"I trust," said Henry, "the law has been duly enforced; for well advised am I, even by learned serjeants near me, that not few of those who studied law were likely to gain more proficiency in archery than knowledge as lawyers, if violation of the statute were winked at. But it is reported, that being in this restrained, they now, and some grave lawyers are named as with them, indulge in games, such as coiting, cloysh, cayls, and carding, as also *shrove* and *slip-groat*, which have been prohibited by law, to all of their most comely and honourable profession."

Lord Erpingham declared his ignorance of the fact. The King fixed his eye on a learned serjeant to the right of the peer, as expecting confirmation or denial.

"Youthful blood, my liege," replied the lawyer, "will fall into some excesses; but I feel assured, that none of mature years, or of weight, as persons learned in the law, are now seen disporting in such fashion."

The King replied, "Wishing to give license for all seemly enjoyments, we cannot choose but feel it would never be merry in England if such disorders eluded reprehension."

"All must own your Majesty well founded in this," remarked Lord Erpingham. "To youth I would concede modest invigorating recreations; but graceless trifling demands strong interference. Such do I think would be meet for him who hanged the *cat on the cross* in Cheapside, with *head shaven*, and rags sewed on the form, in mockery of the habiliments of priesthood, and with a wafer tied between the paws."

"That, my good lord, was described to me as a right

merry conceit, devised to mock the flouting, glozing bishop of Rome, whose pretended zeal in the cause of Heaven seeks to enslave all the potentates of earth."

"Your Majesty knows right well that I am not of mirthful mood; and I must acknowledge, that in torturing a wretched animal, and in picturing with derision the attire of one devoted to the service of the Most High, I saw—I speak under correction—but unseemly merriment and sinful profanation."

Lord Erpingham spoke earnestly. He suspected that he had expressed himself with too much warmth; but he afterwards thought the King inclined to favour the opinion which he had advanced, as Henry made no reply, and in the course of the evening frequently noticed him with much affability.

The festivity of the night concluded, and the King having withdrawn with all his suite, Lord Erpingham went home. He was somewhat surprised to find the *Earl of Poverty* there, This man had waited for his return, and now accosted him as before, in a tone which ill assorted with his mean appearance and illiterate speech. Matters of great moment he said were appointed to be arranged by him, and he produced a letter. Lord Erpingham received it, read the superscription, and looked at the seal, but declined cutting the silk which bound the paper. The Earl of Poverty offered to do it for him, when one Blount, a gentleman, whom Lord Erpingham had noticed in close attendance on the King, most unexpectedly entered. He accounted for his arrival at so unreasonable an hour, (it then being after ten o'clock,) by stating himself to be charged with a confidential message from the king. At these words the Earl of Poverty thought fit to make good his retreat, taking with him the letter. Blount looked earnestly on him as he retired. The royal messenger was then conducted into a private apartment, where he informed Lord Erpingham that what had fallen from him at the banquet, touching the mockery of the Pope, and those who adhered to him, had made such deep impression on the King, that he wished to hear more of his opinions on the like subjects, considering these might serve to correct errors into which he had possibly fallen. Blount asked several questions touching the opinions of Lord Erpingham in matters connected with the authority of the Pope. The

peer reminded his visitor that a recent act of parliament made the expression of any opinion tending to deny the King's supremacy fraught with great danger. He was answered, that the monarch engaged on his honour to protect him from all evil consequences, as he sincerely desired to profit by his advice. Thus assured, Lord Erpingham scrupled not frankly to express his dissent from some of the measures of the King, and especially to deprecate the manner in which he considered the just influence of the Pope to have been set aside. Blount manifested satisfaction at hearing his sentiments, and soon departed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Shot forth a glimpse of fitful light
To quench the gleam of gloomier night.

GRATTAN.

THE cares of Edmund for his wretched fellow-prisoner were vain. If his heart relented in favour of William, it was the only one that did so. But had the kindest attentions that skill and pity could combine, under circumstances the most favourable, been lavished on him, their united power would have proved unavailing. Rage, remorse, shame, and sickness concurred to close his days; and he died unwatched, unpitied, but by him from whom he had merited no such attention.

It was just as the great bell of the monastery sounded the second hour after midnight that the monk expired. Edmund held the dim lamp over his face, and perceived that life was fled. He closed the dead man's eyes; and while he looked on the pale face and inanimate form of the deceased, strong conviction came over him, that a similar fate awaited himself, and that a very few days would dismiss his spirit from its earthly habitation.

The body of William was removed the next morning. To find that a life was extinguished appeared to excite neither surprise nor regret, among those by whom his punishment had been decreed. No speech was addressed to Edmund on the occasion; but the sullen steadfastness with which

they gazed on the remaining prisoner, indicated sorrow that their watchings over him were not immediately to terminate, as they had done in the case of the deceased.

The day after that on which the remains of De Broke had been carried forth for interment, the usual visit was paid to the cell. The monk, who had performed this duty since the attempt at escape which had proved so unfortunate for William, appeared with a small supply of food.

"May I ask one question?" said Edmund, "may I ask if my death is—"

The monk waved his hand to enjoin silence,—at the same time opening his cowl, the prisoner recognised the features of Nicholas Bray.

Edmund, surprised, was about to speak, but Bray again motioned for him to abstain from speech, and pointed to the passage from which he had entered, to intimate that there was danger of being overheard. He looked out from the door, and then returned.

"Peace," said he: "I am waited for: I left one, who expects me, by the steps, and I perceive he remains there: he cannot now hear, but he may advance, and that will preclude me from speaking."

"I was about to ask—"

"If your death is decided upon?" said the jester, anticipating. "It is: should damp and darkness fail to close your eyes, in a very short time other means will be used."

"And know you—"

"This only I know, that the grave which will this night receive the corpse of William is to be kept open for you."

"It is enough."

"Enough!" cried Bray: "marry, it will be enough for any man, but it will be too much for you. My tongue is beginning to amble in its old strain. I must away. Was that the sound of a footstep?"

"I heard none."

"Father Egbert has proposed to admit Lord Erpingham to-morrow to see the dying Edmund. You are to be induced to swallow a stupeying draught, to the end that you may be looked on without being able to complain of your treatment."

"But by what means will they compel me to swallow it?

I thank you for this information. They may tear me limb from limb, but I will drink nothing."

"I have some hope that you will not be pressed. My alacrity in helping to secure you, when you were already in safe custody, has gained me great favour with Egbert; and it may be my office to administer the sleeping draught.—Hush!"

Both listened, to ascertain whether any one drew near. All was silent.

"Of this be assured, that, at the risk of being treated like William, I will attempt something for your preservation. Guard yourself against surprise and sudden exclamation, whatever may chance."

The monk, who had remained without, was heard calling to Bray, who hastily withdrew.

Weaned as the prisoner had been from life by untoward circumstances, he had not so completely estranged himself from the ordinary feelings of men, as to contemplate without emotion the act of assassination which he understood was to be committed. But the indignation inspired by the villainy of the perfidious ecclesiastic, impatience to expose, and, above all, anxiety to find the means of arresting him before he proceeded further in crime, made him desire with tenfold eagerness that the hope which the jester held out to him might not prove delusive. He was disposed to confide in him; but what he had said of his being in favour with Egbert appeared open to suspicion. Bray might have hit upon this scheme for gaining the favour and confidence of the abbot. It was easy to defeat the attempts at escape which he himself suggested, and double treachery would gain the reward of extraordinary fidelity. Yet there was a frankness about Nicholas, which Edmund, much as he had suffered from confiding in appearances, could not believe to be assumed. It was true, that none could be more forward than he had been to seize Edmund when he was detected in the corridor. He seemed elated with the opportunity of so distinguishing himself, and whether that was zeal, or proceeded from the kindly feelings which he now expressed, it was not easy to determine. Edmund inclined to the latter supposition, and only allowed himself to suspect the ability of the jester, which he feared would prove unequal to the design he had avowed.

Of the desperate villany of Egbert he was so far convinced that he doubted not he was capable of proceeding to the bloodiest lengths, to remove for ever one whose existence was to him a source of alarm. To foil him, it was necessary to reject the intoxicating draught which he feared would be offered. If he could save himself from this, whatever the consequences, there might be some hope that Egbert would not escape suspicion. The dagger might be used to dispatch him, but his mangled form, presented to Lord Erpingham, would tell by what means he came to his end; and bringing the murderer to justice, and thus saving Mariana, if she had not already perished, were objects which he considered would be gained on moderate terms, if his life might suffice to pay the price.

He was fixed to resist at all events; but an apprehension came over him, that Egbert would, in the first instance, take measures to disable him from offering effectual opposition. Edmund feared this was practicable; and, maddening at the thought, looked in vain round his narrow cell for some weapon that might at least cheer him in death with a gleam of vengeful joy.

But if the jester should succeed in bringing him the draught. In that case the struggle he contemplated would not occur. Then what course would it be wise for him to take? Would it be well to put it out of the power of Egbert to let him be seen? or would it most confound him, if, by counterfeiting the lethargic insensibility into which it was proposed to throw him, till aware of the presence of Lord Erpingham, he could then start from his couch, and denounce his oppressor? The latter course he preferred; and, resolved on this point, he anxiously awaited the arrival of the moment which was to decide whether or not it would be in his power to give effect to his determination.

Night had come on, and from hour to hour Edmund expected the messenger or messengers of his fate. At length he heard a sound, and dismay came over him, for he could perceive that it was neither one nor two that approached, but a number more than sufficient to overpower the fiercest struggles of one man. He feared that they would prevent him from dying, or from sustaining such injury as would announce to his friends the crime by which he perished;

and in the despair of the moment he looked on the massy walls which enclosed him, and exclaimed,—

"I have heard of the victims of tyranny dashing out their brains against the stones which formed their prison, to escape a more cruel punishment. Am I, who have so much reason to covet such an end, too irresolute to seek it as they have done? As yet, I have the opportunity. A few moments, and it will be withdrawn, and my atrocious enemy must triumph, and continue to flourish in unsuspected guilt. Why do I pause?"

Hesitation was at an end; but in that moment his eye rested on a tall crucifix, black as the walls enclosing it, which was fixed, elevated by one step above the floor, at the extremity of the cell. Edmund deemed it no sacrilege to convert this into a weapon of defence. The corroded nails which held it together soon gave way to his strength, and arming himself with the transverse piece of timber he awaited the coming of the monks. But the sounds became fainter. He was satisfied that the monks were retiring; and he guessed that they were probably engaged in performing the obsequies of William. In this he was confirmed, when, after so much time had elapsed as might suffice to deposit the coffin in the ground, with such brief ceremony as they were likely to bestow, he heard the parties at the same distance as before, and perceived that they were ascending.

All was again profoundly still. An hour had passed since Edmund heard the monks, and as yet there was no appearance of any intention to carry into effect the resolution which the jester had announced to have been taken. Musing on the strange situation in which he found himself, a drowsiness, which he could hardly strive against, attacked him: he rose to shake it off, while he mentally inquired if it were possible that he could already have received the opiate. He suspiciously examined the bread and water which remained of that which had been given him for his sustenance, but nothing was discernible that could warrant the belief that these had been adulterated. His eyes closed, but he was quickly roused by hearing the lock of the dungeon turned: the door opened, and Nicholas Bray appeared.

"I have unwelcome tidings to bring," said he. "Egbert will suffer the potion to be administered by no other hand but his own."

"And will he come alone?"

"Will he go to the devil alone! Not he, if he can help it:—no, he will take care to be well attended; for now that William is dead, he inclines to the belief, that you offered violence to him, when you broke from his custody, and will therefore be prepared to bind you hand and foot, if needful."

"Then there is no hope?"

"There, you are wrong. True it is, if they come and find you here, there will be no hope for you. But I trust that when they arrive you will be missing."

"How?"

"Beshrew me, if I have time to tell you how, unless I give up the chance of showing you."

"I say no more:—let us forth at once, without speech: good fool."

"Your pardon, I am no good fool; and we will not forth at once. You must yet again hear the door closed upon you, for at present they look for me above."

"Before you can return, Egbert and his associate may be here."

"Not for past two hours yet. They are afraid that the effects of the drugs, if Lord Erpingham should not come early, may cease too soon, and therefore they will not visit you before day-break. Here is a dry and decent looking dress for you; wear this, and be ready to move when I return."

"Stay——"

"I may not tarry now, or you will chance to tarry to-morrow, which were better done without."

"But tell me, can you give me a sword, or any weapon?"

"By holy St. Egbert, and that's our abbot, and he is the devil, I can give nothing of the sort. But I see you have managed to provide yourself with the means of making a tolerably forcible appeal to the understanding of any man, who has not been blessed with a wooden skull. Pray act deliberately, for I should not like you in a hurry to deal a blow at me, as I have not sufficient confidence in the thickness of my head, to think lightly of such a present."

"I wish but to sell my life dearly."

"You had better not sell it at all; for you won't find a very good market, seeing it is of small use to any one but

the present owner. Keep it by you, as a trinket for the amusement of your friends, till it gets too old for sale, even if anybody wanted to buy such a thing second-hand."

With these words he closed the door; and Edmund heard him retreating with such careless haste, that again the idea occurred to him that he might be acting a treacherous part, and had nothing to fear from detection.

A considerable time elapsed, and the jester returned not. Edmund was convinced that he could not do what he had promised, if it had ever been his intention to attempt it. Satisfied of this, his former thoughts returned, when the silence which had prevailed was again broken. Some one, he was sure, drew near with slow and cautious steps. He listened, and thought he distinguished those of more than one person. The jester, he was convinced, had failed of success, or had betrayed him.

CHAPTER XXX.

Antiquity deserveth that reverence that men should make a stay awhile, and stand thereupon, and look about.

LORD BACON.

A FEW moments proved him to be mistaken, and the jester appeared alone. He sustained in his arms a load of such magnitude that it surpassed his own stature. Having laid it on the ground, he withdrew without speaking.

This conduct was inexplicable. What Bray had deposited in the cell had somewhat the appearance of a human figure. Edmund approached it, and withdrew the coarse cloth in which it had been wrapped, when, with equal amazement and disgust, he beheld the ghastly countenance of William de Broke. Why the corpse of the wretched monk should have been brought there it was impossible to conjecture, as he could not conceive in what way this would operate for or against the intended escape.

But his embarrassment was not of long duration.

Bray returned, and proceeded to explain.

"I could not speak when I brought your old companion

back, for I thought a sudden movement had taken place in the refectory, from the sounds which I heard, and hastened to satisfy myself that Egbert was not yet inquiring for me."

"But for what purpose have you brought the corpse?"

"William comes here to be once more your substitute."

"What mean you?"

"De Broke in size and figure was your exact counterpart. His complexion and yours were widely different; but his paleness will be yours when you die, and therefore I am not without hope that his countenance may pass for yours while you live."

"Impossible! The shape of the face, generally, may bear some resemblance to mine, but in several respects the difference is so great that no such imposture as you contemplate can be practised with chance of success."

"I marvel little that you should be slow to believe that this singularly ugly villain can in any case be thought to resemble you. But this shall be."

"Look at the eyebrows; look at the beard; look at the hair on the crown of the head. Can colours be more opposed than these and the hue of my hair?"

"Why, I do not deny that there are some shades of difference: but in these times, when so many are ready to swear that black is white, I nothing despair, of furnishing those who may be that way inclined with some *colour* for committing perjury."

"You cannot be serious?"

"Not very easily I confess, save and except when I am hungry. But let me tell you, Master Edmund, that I have said nought but what I mean to make good for all that. Nick Bray would not have kept his footing as a fool so long as he did, had he not well studied disguises. This fellow's silver hair shall presently be as black as yours."

While speaking, he produced a liquid which quickly changed the hue of the dead man's locks. He continued to apply the composition where it was required, and soon completed his task, to the astonishment of Edmund, who had previously no conception of the prodigious change that might thus be effected.

"Now bestow your eyes on my work," cried Bray with exultation. "You cannot say I make the devil fair; but, certainly, I have stripped one of his votaries of much of his

diabolical aspect, in making William de Broke look so unlike himself."

"I confess surprise," said Edmund, "at the change, but still there are points in which he is much unlike me."

"And what of that? Death makes a change in every one, and people sometimes give him credit for making greater changes than even he can effect; and this will account for any slight want of resemblance."

"I cannot think the cheat will escape detection."

"Till to-morrow it will. Dressed in your discarded garb, those who come here an hour hence will not care to examine the dead man very closely. Black eye-brows will never put them in mind of William: and besides, from the shrinking and fearful glances which I saw them throw on him, I am quite certain that few of them care to look on a corpse at all. Believing you dead, they will never think of taking measures that can interfere with our design. I remain behind, and shall probably be most about the dead man, and may therefore have some opportunity of favouring the deception."

"Should you be discovered!"

"In that case I must succeed you and William in the enjoyment of this tranquil retreat; but you, being at liberty, will be able to spoil the worthy Egbert's sport, and soon recal me to the light of day."

Bray was not idle while this conversation passed. The dead monk was attired in the discarded habiliments of Edmund, and placed on the mattress in a posture which seemed one to which the deceased had sunk from pain and exhaustion. Edmund could not but admire the dexterity of the jester, and still doubting whether the corpse could be taken for his, he thought it next to impossible for it at once to be recognised as that of William.

Bray now led the way. He carefully locked the door, when they had gained the passage; and, bearing the cloth in which he had lately wrapped the remains of William, he proceeded to the vault where they had lately reposed, and in which Edmund had formerly been secured. Edmund gazed with sensations not easily to be described on the pillar from which his shadow had been thrown on the wall before the astonished Egbert, and he almost expected to see some other concealed watcher.

"I know the way better than I did," said Bray, in an elated and confident tone.

"It were better that you should not speak so loud," said Edmund.

"We run little risk of being encountered or overheard," the jester replied: "the brethren above have been too much occupied in bestowing William, and arranging the manner in which you should be disposed of to-night, to be likely to walk this way yet.—Be careful how you advance. Take care of that pit.—That is the grave of William."

"I see it, and shall not fall into it."

"I hope not. But you were in some danger of doing so a short time ago."

They left the vault by the door from which Egbert had formerly entered. Thence they advanced by a rugged passage, narrow and of considerable extent.

"Are we nearly at the place by which we can leave this scene of crime?" Edmund enquired.

"I think we are," the jester answered; "and we must be careful not to stray beyond it; for if we go too far, instead of getting to the place I desire to reach, we shall approach the neighbouring nunnery."

"That of St. Helen?"

"Aye, marry, shall we. Now if we get there, I know not what reception we shall have. I, being somewhat stricken in years, might come off sorrily; while you, if not suspected of rebellion against their holy confessor, would be kindly received. But as this is a matter of some uncertainty, we shall do well to stop short of the convent."

Edmund shuddered at being reminded of the depravity which prevailed within those walls; but the present was no time to express what he felt. He replied but by asking,—

"And whither do you propose that we should make our way?"

"There are two houses you may heretofore have remarked, which interpose between the convent of St. Helen and the street in which the granary stands, over against the heavy house of old Sir Hugh Nevill."

"I remember that house."

"Little did poor Sir Hugh think when he was building it, two or three hundred years ago, that his mansion, the *Leadenhall*, would give the street in which it stood its own

knickname, as it has done. One of the houses I mentioned is used by our holy fraternity to give forth *doles* and *alms* at certain seasons."

"I know it well; if we get there, must not instant detection ensue?"

"Know you not that the vault of which I speak is inhabited by a decayed pepperer, who depends upon Egbert and his fellows for his bread?"

"Therefore, so it seems to me, our danger must be great, for he will deem it right incontinently to detain us, and apprise Egbert of our doings."

"There is no risk of that, for the pepperer is too much accustomed to the disorderly proceedings of the inhabitants of the monastery to think it strange that one of the order should forth at night. And, mark you, hard by the rear of that house stands another, from which you can pass to the cloisters of the convent. Now, when you find yourself in the first house, have a care that you stir not towards the second, for that may lead you into much peril, seeing, if it be closed, it shall be asked of you whence you come, and contrariwise, being opened, you shall be sent towards the convent, which you seek not at this moment."

"How then shall I act?"

"Even as though you would retrace the steps you have now taken, and so you shall reach the street with ease, for the old pepperer will nothing doubt you are from the convent."

"Should it chance otherwise?"

"Throttle him on the spot, that he may not detain me when I follow."

"And why will you not go with me?"

"Let the reasons which I gave you before suffice. But here our speech must end. Pass up this ladder, push up the trap, and you are in the house; and whether the old man be waking or not, make direct for the street. Being there, I strongly advise you to use the precautions which I formerly devised, and approach not Lord Erpingham before the dark hour. Take heed of this letter to my friend Mr. Common Hunt; for Dick Longthong will harbour no ecclesiastic who brings not good credentials."

Edmund ascended the ladder, and found himself in the house which had been described to him. He saw nothing of

its inhabitant, and was crreful to make no noise which might disturb him. But bewildered by the various ideas which occupied his mind, as well as by the gloomy intricacies which he had just traversed, he forgot which way he had been directed to turn. Compelled to trust to chance, his good fortune conducted him to the door he sought. It was daylight, and already the streets had begun to be peopled by the industrious classes. Turning quickly to the left, through Bethlem gate, he passed the old hospital, frequently looking round to ascertain whether or not he was pursued, and soon found himself in perfect solitude.

The sun had just risen, when he gained the immense fields then lying close to the city. He stood on the margin of the gentle stream, which passed across them, and through the great wall, from which circumstance it received the name of *Wall-Brook*. The wall itself was no contemptible object, while the lofty churches, monasteries, and other public edifices of the city which it enclosed, and seemed to defend, challenged admiration singly, but presented a spectacle of more than ordinary grandeur, giving them to the view in picturesque unity. In the fore-ground of the prospect, as Edmund looked towards the metropolis, the tower and church of All-Hallows in the Wall, and the two turrets of Moorgate, illumined by the first rays of the sun, beautifully relieved the dark, dense, and almost interminable line of the wall, from which they seemed to rise: beneath the arch of the gate all was darkness. He stood in a large marshy plain, from which a footpath lay in a north-west direction. It was continued over "Fiusburie Field," and through other fields, (no regular road being then in existence) towards Islington. It was intersected by two other paths, one of which came from the north-east, apparently from Shoreditch, and the other went almost straight from Bethlem, till they joined near Moorgate, at which place they were terminated by the gardens which occupied the sites of Type-street, and Grub-street, (names well-known to British literature,) and reached to Cripplegate. On the northern side of the marsh, immediately without the wall, and near the entrance of the eastern part of Finsbury Field, Edmund saw, almost on the very spot now consecrated to classical research by the erection of the London Institution, the

official residence of *Mr. Common Hunt*, "My Lord Mayor's Dogge House."

This was a moderate sized tenement, in which the officer, who has more than once been mentioned, passed his days in attendance on the hounds kept for the civic chief, when he chose to indulge in the amusements of the chase. Thither Edmund directed his steps. To knock was unnecessary; for a hundred clamorous voices, barking in concert, announced the approach of a visitor. Dick Longthong, though a little surprised, was not uncivil, and became most friendly and cordial, on reading the note of the jester.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Such an everlasting grace,
Such a beatific face,
In cloisters here this narrow floor
That possessed all hearts before.

LOVELACE.

At an early hour on the appointed day, Lord Erpingham presented himself at the monastery. He was received in the parlour, and Egbert forthwith made his appearance.

"In the midst of life we are in death," he began without preface or greeting: "this we are taught, and this, we all aver, we know; but nor reason nor experience can prepare us sufficiently to expect that fate which awaits us at every age."

Lord Erpingham was struck with the impressive solemnity of Egbert's address. "And what," said he, "may this portend? I fear, from your language, that Edmund is worse,—that his very life is despaired of."

"Not so, my lord. Hope, and not despair, is that which now connects itself with his name. The thread of his existence has snapped; and the spirit which aspired to sublimer flights than earth could give it scope for, has sought its native sky."

Astonishment and grief were expressed in the countenance of Lord Erpingham. He replied,—

"To die is natural. Yet there is a season during which man may look to flourish. That being past, to lament that

we are not ever to remain the inhabitants of this soil were sinful weakness; but when youth is prematurely blasted, even at the opening of a career of pious glory, we cannot but mourn the hard decree—so to us it appears—of Providence."

"Trust me, I judged not that the moment of his departure was so near at hand. But, my lord, He who lent, has unquestionably the right, as well as the power to resume when it seemeth good to Him; all that remains for us is submission."

Lord Erpingham bowed in assent, and intimated that he was ready to see the corpse.

"Nay," cried Egbert, "I desired that you should behold the young man while he lived, but I would not inflict a severe —an unnecessary—shock on your feelings, by showing his person, altered as it is by death."

"Holy father, this kindness is unnecessarily extended. I shrink not from beholding in death the form of one I loved in life. I would, on no account, forego it."

"It will distress you too much."

"The grief which I already sustain cannot be augmented."

"But, my lord, consider. To see one whom you have only beheld in the gay bloom of laughing youth stretched in ghastly state, and arrayed for the grave—reflect how appalling the spectacle!"

"Yet I covet to view it."

"Surely, my lord, you cannot suppose—" Egbert paused in confusion. Words had nearly escaped which he had no wish to utter. He recollected the part he had to act, and added, "You cannot resolve to sustain the shock that—"

"The worst is past," Lord Erpingham replied.

"Let me pray you—let me insist, my lord, that you spare yourself."

"Heed not me, good father. On this point I must be obstinate."

The manner in which Lord Erpingham pronounced the words, "*Heed not me*," struck the conscious Egbert as fraught with latent meaning; and the perseverance with which the noble visitor pressed to see the dead body he suspected sprang from doubt of what he had been told. After another fruitless attempt to induce Lord Erpingham

not to persist in the request which he had made, Egbert reluctantly led the way to the cell in which Edmund had slept, and in which the remains of William de Broke were now deposited.

The gloom which had always pervaded the apartment had been deepened on this occasion. Lord Erpingham approached the bed on which the corpse was extended. He saw a figure not unlike that of Edmund; and while he looked on the carefully shaded face of the deceased had no suspicion of the imposture. He then spoke:

"Death has made no small alteration in the aspect of this dear youth. My eyes are dim, and tears perhaps cause them to misrepresent what they behold. They picture to me the care-worn lineaments of more advanced age; and I doubt if I should have recognised this countenance, formerly so well known, had I not been previously informed."

Egbert replied,—"Death produces an awful change."

"This hand," said Lord Erpingham, taking William by tht hand, "I hoped had been fashioned to close my eyes. The Almighty has ordered it otherwise—His will be done."

He gently relinquished his hold, and suffered the impatient Egbert to lead him forth.

Egbert saw Lord Erpingham depart with little satisfaction. Though the peer had been imposed upon, and though the arrangement he made with respect to the interment was precisely what he would have dictated, his heart was not at ease. As the jester had expected, the corpse was not known when Egbert sought the dungeon to compel the prisoner to receive the draught prepared for him; but subsequently, when removed from the place where he had been immured, the features of William were recognised. The treason which this disclosed inspired well-grounded alarm. Egbert then felt assured that William was not the individual who had favoured the attempts of Edmund. He knew not whom to suspect, and the danger appeared equally great to prefer a random accusation, or to suffer the offence to escape punishment.

From all the inquiries which he could make, he was led to conclude that Edmund, though escaped from his prison, had not passed beyond the walls of the monastery. He determined on a rigid search, but had not been able to execute this design when Lord Erpingham arrived. To

prepare him for that catastrophe which had long been dete mined upon, Egbert had announced Edmund to be in gre danger. After this he could not meet the peer with t statement that the patient, thus enfeebled, had run awa To risk something was absolutely unavoidable, and decided on that step which, it has been seen, was take with success.

Bray had managed so well that, by means of the extrao dinary nimbleness with which he passed from place to plac Egbert could remember having had him in his view at eve hour of the night; and he, of all the fraternity, was the o least suspected. He was even consulted as to the be means of discovering Edmund, if he remained within t walls, and of meeting his charges, if he had fairly escaped.

It was to no purpose that search was made, and Egbe already regretted the part he had acted that morning. H never doubted but Edmund would hasten to communica to Lord Erpingham all that he knew, and lamented havi lost an opportunity of attempting to dispose his lordship reject, as revived calumnies, the statements which would made to him. He feared that it was too late to make t desired impression, but it was worth trying for; and determined to request Lord Erpingham would revisit t monastery that evening, when he would announce th Edmund had fled, and had most unexpectedly proved hims the reverse of all that he had seemed.

In the midst of these anxieties, he was summoned to t assistance of the prioress. It was not the day for confe sion, but the call was so pressing that he promptly obey not in the pursuit of forbidden pleasures, as at other tim he had done; but in the belief that something extraordina had occurred.

He found the prioress inflamed almost to madness. T conduct of Mariana on a former day had been described him. Egbert was well content to avenge the affront which the prioress had complained; but the death William, and the events consequent thereon, had so occ pied him, that he had found no leisure for visiting t convent. The severities to which Mariana had be exposed, in consequence of incurring the displeasure of t superior, had not subdued her spirit. She had not scrupl to express her indignation in bolder language than former

when the prioress again admitted her to her presence. The new indignity so exasperated the fiery spirit opposed to Mariana, that Egbert was sent for, to aid with his advice her thirst for vengeance.

Little pleased at being called upon at a time when such extraordinary anxieties tortured him, he at first declined any immediate interference. But, informed of the intrepid spirit with which Mariana had replied to the most terrific menaces, he began to think that he discovered some connection between her unlooked-for courage and the flight of Edmund. He took the resolution to question her forthwith, and hastened to the chapel where the prioress told him Mariana was at that moment.

He saw her mournfully reclining over the altar. At the sound of his steps she raised her head. The exertion which she had made in the grief and indignation of the moment was too much for her strength; her courage sunk as the cause of her alarm retired, and her face was bathed with tears. Egbert had just looked on a countenance distorted by rage; and turning from the masculine violence of the prioress to the delicately feminine sorrow of Mariana, he was struck with the contrast, and a sudden start did homage to the touching power of beauty in distress.

But generous compassion found no place in the heart of Egbert. He saw a tempting treasure within his reach, and was resolved to grasp it at all events; but he preferred gaining it, if possible, by insidious artifice, to snatching it with open violence.

"Holy father," said Mariana, "may I hope that you are here to protect a feeble sufferer?"

"My protection, daughter, you may command. But why are you in tears? I fear you have been disobedient to the prioress?"

"I never presumed to disobey her till she invited me to offend heaven."

"You are rash, child. It is not well that you should be ready to extenuate your failings. Much I suspect that not the dread of offending heaven, but a weak attachment to some worldly lover, has caused those tears, which so vainly, yet so profusely, flow.

Mariana answered not.

"You reply but by a sob. Come, daughter, recollect

yourself. Do you not sigh to be the companion of one who has broken his vows?"

"No."

"Ponder well on what you say. Are not your thoughts with him who wooed you once unknown to your uncle?—are they not with Edmund?"

"I have not offended by thinking of him; and he has not forgotten his vows to heaven."

"Never practise dissimulation with me. Have you not in some way been privy to his sacrilegious flight from the monastery?"

"I nothing know of it. Has Edmund fled?"

"That look tells me how much you rejoice that he has thus far succeeded; and also tells me, that you were not unacquainted with his design."

"It is not so, holy father; but I cannot repress the hope that some sympathising heart has described to him the fearful peril of my situation."

"You then would fain be the companion of his flight?"

"I would pass from scenes of horrible profanation;—scenes so dreadfully different from those in which it was intended that my life should be passed. O, father! when you shall know——"

"I came not here to listen to charges against the prioress. It is enough for me that you have avowed a disposition to join the apostate Edmund in his flight."

"I said not so."

"The vengeful designs which he cherishes are not yet quite sure of being accomplished; the means which crushed the wretched fool, Clifford, are still at my command."

"You alarm me, sir."

"Be wise, and you have no cause for alarm. Learn to be content with the happiness that courts you here, and danger cannot reach you."

"But danger, in its most horrid form, has already assailed."

"Confide in me, and no one shall harm you."

While he spoke, he took her hand, and would have drawn her towards him. His tone—his look—his trembling eagerness—alarmed her, and Mariana receded from his touch. He saw the horror which he had inspired, and angrily demanded—

"What folly is this!"

"You anger affrights—"

"Then appease it straight. Still you shrink from me, as though some loathsome monster shocked your senses. This mincing delicacy becomes you not."

"Indeed, indeed, I have not wished to offend."

"How!—have you not admitted you would be the companion of Edmund's flight? But vain the hope: his, you shall never be; and even should the worst arrive,—should he prevail in what I know he will attempt,—in ruin I shall be able to exult that I have already tasted the joy of vengeance."

"Of vengeance!"

"Vengeance was the word. You, who have sighed to be his, are destined to be mine. Away with these affected terrors."

And while he spoke, he clasped the agitated Mariana in his arms.

Already Egbert exulted in the helpless state to which he had reduced the sufferer, when a strange sound burst on his ear. The shouts of a boisterous multitude, mingled in discordant confusion, resounded through the building. He was at a loss to determine whether the noise originated without or within the convent: but he was quickly satisfied of the latter; and, unable to move from astonishment at what he heard, he still clasped Mariana, when a disorderly crowd rushed into the chapel. A new shout called on those who were behind to hasten forward, and, with coarse scoffings and loud execrations, they rushed on the abbot, calling out to their fellows, that another holy confessor had been detected with his mistress. This announcement, couched in the grossest terms, passed from mouth to mouth; and the priest and his companion were ordered to be *coursed*. It was at this moment that Mariana revived. She found herself forced into the street, amidst the taunts and hootings of the populace; but her youth, her beauty, and her tears, saved her from the missiles which were liberally poured on the head of the astonished Egbert. The eagerness of the crowd to gain situations in which they could contribute to his punishment, opened a way for Mariana to pass from the thickest of the throng. Eventually, she succeeded in getting away. A few boys pursued her with insulting cries; but they used no violence; and she still fled, not knowing where

she was, where to seek a refuge, or where to apply for shelter or advice.

CHAPTER XXXII.

———the sun is down;
His last glance fades on the mountain's peak;
And the drooping heads of the herbage brown
Are faintly tinged with his yellow streak.
High-ways and By-ways.

TWILIGHT came on, when Mariana found herself in the midst of fields.

All had desisted from following her. This was some relief; but the melancholy embarrassments of her situation were painfully pressed on her consideration. She was alone, in a country of which she knew nothing but the language. It had not been the object of Ferdinand to form connections in England, especially while Mariana remained with him. Edmund was the only friend that he had: and to seek him, had she been satisfied that no impropriety would attach to her doing so, was utterly out of the question. Ferdinand had given her reason to believe that his stay in England would not be long; and as soon as he thought he had ascertained that she was happily settled in her convent, it was his wish that Mariana should thenceforward never hear his name. She did not even know whether he remained in England or not.

There was yet another evil which she felt not at that time, but which, had it been the only one to which she was exposed, was no small one. She was without money; not a single *angel*, not a *noble* remained to her.

Though much fatigued, she thought not of rest. She walked on without object as without hope. Frequently she looked round to see that none of her late pursuers watched her steps. She perceived a man approaching. He soon overtook, and walked near her for some minutes without speaking. Fears, which it would be difficult to define, came over Mariana, while with heavy heart and weary limbs she kept on her dreary way.

"Whither go you, maiden?" said the stranger, who appeared to be young. "The night is fast closing in. Lies your convent in this direction?"

Mariana attempted no reply.

"Why thus mute? Tell me, pretty wanderer, whither would you journey?"

"I—I know not."

"Indeed—are you walking then at this hour and in these fields for amusement?"

"Amusement!—O, no."

"You are trifling with me, pretty one. Never be thus shy. Tell me where you desire to arrive?"

"No where."

"And are you accustomed thus to travel through the fields of Essex without seeking any particular spot?"

"No."

"You seem almost exhausted:—lean on my arm."

"Pray you, sir, pass on. If a burthen to myself, I would not be one to you."

"I cannot leave one so pretty thus. You seem sad. Are you known in these parts?"

"No."

"I guessed as much. Put yourself under my guidance, and I will conduct you to a secure resting place."

"Much I thank your proffered kindness, sir, but I may not trouble you."

"Nay, nay, the wearer of that face, sad though it seem, can give no trouble."

While speaking, he offered to take her arm. She moved a little from the path to avoid him.

"Concern not yourself for me. I would not detain you."

"But tell me, lovely pilgrim, whither you would repair. Will you pass to East-Ham?"

"I know it not."

"Or will you to Greenwich?"

Mariana knew not where to seek rest for the night, she therefore gave no answer to the stranger's last question. He continued:—

"If you will thither, I can conduct you by the shortest path to the ferry."

"To me, sir, it matters little whither I bend my steps."

"That is well spoken. Right glad am I to find you are a

free agent: since it is even so, leave all to me. I will still be you guide to Greenwich."

"But when I am there—" said Mariana; and here she paused, wanting resolution to inquire what step it might next behove her to take.

"To what end?"

"To aid you, doubtless."

"I know not what I ought to covet, situated as I am."

"You shall be aided by my judgment: I warrant, it is somewhat new to you to be left to yourself. Is it not?"

"It is."

"You shall feel no grievance thence arising to-night."

Mariana thought the kindness of the stranger great; and replied,—

"For this bounty I know not how to be sufficiently grateful."

"I love thy frankness passing well. Since it is even thus, it shall be merry with us before we part."

Again he offered to take her arm, and again she withdrew from his touch.

"Why thus cautious? None can see now. But be it as you will:—a strict fast improves appetite."

He described himself to be acquainted with many of the royal servants at Greenwich. One of these held a house near the palace, where good lodging till the morning might be obtained. Thither he proposed to take her; and Mariana, hoping to find some female to whom she might explain her situation, was content to remain at Greenwich that night.

They crossed the ferry, passed the palace, and shortly after the stranger stopped at a wooden house which had a gateway beneath. He entered the gateway, opened a door, and invited Mariana to follow him. The house was near the river, and wore a lonely desolate appearance. The gloomy aspect of the place appalled Mariana, and though repeatedly called, she wanted resolution to follow.

Her guide returned.

"Take you my arm, merry one," he said: "we are now at home."

There was something coarsely familiar in his address, which startled Mariana.

"Heed me no more, sir," she mildly replied. "I wish not to rest here."

"Come you in," her conductor replied, "and you shall find a good fire, and a floor well strewed with rushes. Then for a bed—"

"I question not the cheer which may be found, nor would I detain you from it."

With these words she withdrew a few steps. The stranger followed.

"Why, how now, mistress!" he exclaimed, in a loud reproachful tone, "did you expect a lodging in the palace? Here is a good sound house, in which you will find a snug chamber—what would you more?"

"Nothing, friend; therefore, with thanks I bid you farewell."

"Nay, since I have come thus far, you are not now to fly from your bargain. Go to, I'll none of your practising here;—in I say, in."

"I know not to what your speech points. What would you, man?"

"Marry, that shall be explained anon, better than mere words can explain. But in, I say."

He threw his arm round her waist. Mariana burst from his grasp, shrieking for help. He seized her again.

"I am not to be fooled thus," he cried, "by a runaway nun's pretended modesty. Here you shall stay to-night. In the morning go where you list."

"And by what right," cried one, who now snatched the pale fugitive from the ruffian's grasp, "do you thus insist?"

"By her own consent."

"The consent is revoked."

"And what gave you authority to decide between us?"

"The shriek of distress, and the voice of violence, and by this right arm, an indifferently powerful one some have found it. You will experience rough treatment if you prove me further."

"You are not going to carry the girl, though, for all that," said Mariana's late guide.

He again took hold of Mariana, but was himself seized at the same moment, and thrown off with violence. It was now clear that force could nothing avail, and he contented himself with furiously railing at his antagonist.

"Amuse yourself," retorted the latter, "with silly insolence, if that can pleasure you. The respectful distance at

which you hold your person, more than atones for the effrontery of any taunt that your wit can devise."

And without deigning further reply he withdrew, leading Mariana. Though nearly dark, he could discern a countenance of more than common beauty, and his steadfast gaze was repeatedly fixed upon it. Bewildered by the stormy scenes of the day, after the conduct which had shocked her first in Egbert, and then in her late pretended friend, Mariana could as yet but little felicitate herself on her situation. She was in the power of a man, and all men, she feared, were alike.

"May I ask," inquired her deliverer, "what melancholy chance placed you near yonder brawler?"

"It was accident, and fearful calamity."

"Calamity!"

"Even so. The kindness of an only relative placed me, as he thought, in honourable security. But those whom he regarded as the most pious of mankind proved monsters, from whom I have been accidentally saved."

"Your faltering voice admonishes me that to question further might inflict pain. Know you any one in this town beneath whose roof you can rest?"

"Alas! no. I am wholly a stranger in England."

"And whence came you, then?"

"I am from Spain, and know no person in this country."

"Then you must with me."

"With you!" Mariana exclaimed; and the rudeness from which she had just been rescued, and the treachery of Egbert, were again present to her imagination.

The stranger marked her tremulous voice, and was at no loss to guess the cause. He remarked on it:—

"Cruelty has made you timid, and you fear to find a new oppressor. Dismiss your anxiety. I will speedily leave you; but I will first conduct you to one of your own sex, in whom you may with safety confide. She has known affliction herself, and in her house you will find a commodious asylum for the night. Nay, cease to tremble. If there be truth in man, you are safe from harm. Your situation particularly interests me. Why you shall know hereafter."

A little re-assured by the apparent sincerity of his manner, Mariana suffered him to conduct her through the town. He stopped at a house near the church, which had an air of

neatness about the exterior, very different from that of the dismal abode which Mariana had refused to enter.

The door was opened. Mariana was told by her deliverer, that he would not risk alarming her by passing into the same dwelling that night. To the mistress of the house, who soon appeared, he addressed himself. He briefly appealed to her benevolence in behalf of an innocent sufferer, (for such he said she would prove,) and entreated that the lady he accosted would allow Mariana to repose there till the morning.

Some surprise was manifested; but before reply was given, he added,—

"I would not in a common case thus trespass on your bounty; but the situation of this young maiden is not a little extraordinary; and, trust me, you will never repent conceding the boon which I solicit."

Consent was given with much cordiality; and promising to return in the morning, the individual who had conducted Mariana thither took his leave. The mistress of the house was reserved in her manner. When she spoke, her language was most kind and courteous, but her eye was sometimes fixed on Mariana with a vacant stare, which surprised the guest; and it was evident that her thoughts, wandering from the objects immediately before her, were wholly engrossed with other matters.

Mariana slightly partook of refreshments, which with much hospitality were brought forth. She then followed her entertainer to a bedchamber.

"You shall have," said the latter, "my own bed. I will rest in another room."

Mariana requested that this might not be.

"Say nothing, child, it shall be no inconvenience to me."

Mariana replied by thanks. The lady, who had turned to a small cabinet, appeared steadfastly to gaze on its contents. The slightest motion of Mariana caused a corresponding change of position on the part of the lady, evidently for the purpose of interposing her form to the exclusion of all view of the object which she contemplated. Having closed the cabinet, she attempted to move it from the room, but for this her strength was insufficient, and she retired.

The mysterious caution used with respect to the cabinet powerfully attracted the attention of Mariana. Circum-

stanced as she was, every thing alarmed her. She coveted to know what the lady had so curiously regarded. She approached the cabinet; but reproved as unworthy the desire which she strove in vain to conquer, and was withdrawing, when her veil hitched on that part of the fastening which adhered to the cover, when the cabinet was unlocked. Before she had time to disengage it, her backward step had raised the lid, and she saw the wasted countenance of a human being. The cabinet was lined with lead. The ghastly object which had arrested her attention reposed in a small shroud, and a thin crape veil partially covered what it could not conceal. The flesh was dried away, the eyes had perished in their sockets, but part of the discoloured gums remained, and the beard, grey from age, was carefully spread over the white ruff placed round this sad relic of one departed. The door was opening, when Mariana suffered the lid to fall. The mistress entered, accompanied by a servant, with whose assistance the cabinet was removed. Mariana thought the lady bestowed upon her a look intimating suspicion of what had been done in her absence. The kindness of her language when she again returned could not dissipate this idea; and Mariana shuddered at the thought of passing the night in a house which she supposed to have been the scene of murder. What might be intended with respect to herself she was at a loss to surmise; but she entertained no hope of repose, and was only prevented by the fear of being forcibly obstructed from making known her desire to leave the house forthwith. For the present she resolved to remain silent, and, if possible, to retreat in the course of the night, and take the chance of finding a new resting place, where she might be less menaced by treachery and outrage.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

O this is love! fast clinging still
Though danger, ignominy, ill;
This, this is love.—

GRATTAN.

FROM that night on which Clifford and Elinor perceived a stranger listening, as it appeared, to their conversation, the

latter felt reluctant to remain alone after nightfall. It however so happened, that in the next few weeks Clifford absented himself from his humble home more than usual. He had been in the habit of walking on the lonely shore in silence and in darkness. Many hours were thus consumed in painful meditation; but Elinor, while she wept for the mental affliction to which her lord was a prey, had at least the satisfaction of knowing that he was near. But this comfort, mean as it was, had now been withdrawn; and when she most needed his protection, she found herself in perfect solitude.

The mind by degrees becomes reconciled to situations the most perilous or unpleasant, so far as to lose that terror and keen sense of irksomeness which are the evils first resulting from them. Elinor, if she desired his presence, felt no longer disturbed at the absence of Clifford; and the appearance of the listener was almost forgotten.

Sitting one night alone, she thought the sound of Clifford's footstep struck her ear. She listened for the repetition of it, and was convinced. Some one approached, and she hastened to open the door. A man entered, and stood before her. His face was half concealed by his hand, but she quickly perceived that it was not Clifford.

"What want ye, sir," she inquired, "that thus you come unbidden to this humble dwelling? Whom seek ye?"

"Its degraded, wretched mistress," replied the intruder, in a voice which made her start with emotion, for she recognised her father.

"I see," he continued, "you shrink from me. This I condemn not: the shame and remorse it indicates become your condition."

"I wish not to provoke my father, but trust it will not be deemed offence if I disclaim commendation not my due. Though I cannot but dread your anger, it will not fall on shame or remorse."

"How!—have you no vestige remaining of that modesty which once made you lovely, that you feel nothing for the shame which you have heaped on your dishonoured family?"

"If to have connected myself with calumniated worth, and unmerited poverty, be shame, I merit reproach; but my conscience tells me this can never be: and a day will arrive

when, on calm reflection, you shall acknowledge that you judged your daughter harshly."

"Heaven send me patience! Dare you then shamelessly contend that, in flying from a fond father to the arms of a criminal paramour, there is nothing to make reason condemn, or honour blush?"

"Those who maliciously traduced my husband have, perhaps ignorantly, slandered me. He is no criminal—he is no paramour. Clifford is, and lowly as his estate may be, I avow it with pride, he is my husband."

Sir Geoffrey did not expect this intelligence; and, little as he wished for such a son-in-law, he was slightly consoled at hearing a positive contradiction given to one serious charge against his daughter, which till then he had never dared to question.

"It is of small import," he moodily replied, "what title you give the wretch, since the disgrace of being his cannot be explained away; but, little as you merit from the father you have wronged, my pity interferes to snatch you from the gulf in which you have been plunged by folly. Leave the degraded Clifford, and you shall still have a father and a home."

"Never, sir."

"Still disobedient! Was it not enough that you spurned the prudent counsel which I offered, heeded not the engagements into which I had entered, and fled my roof to get me pointed at by the finger of scorn?"

"Let me entreat your pardon, and for one moment speak in my own justification. It was you that destined me to be the wife of Clifford. You credulously received the tale of his guilt; I knew him better, and knew that he was innocent. With this impression on my mind, I scrupled not to become his wife; for my heart heeded not his poverty, disdained to study arithmetic, and could not learn to admit *sovereigns*, *reals*, and *George-nobles*, into its calculations."

"Be this as you will; but I hoped months enough had passed to cure you of the romantic folly which induced you to err, and expected to witness joy and gratitude when invited to leave a tyrant, for such I know him to be, who long since spurned you as a valueless toy."

"He has not acted such a part."

"Practise no new deception. I know (for I have taken care that he should be watched) that he has churlishly reproached, and scornfully ordered you from him."

"Sir, I will not deny that he has sometimes harshly spoken; but even when this has chanced, the swift atoning tear has pursued his wrath, and washed away its traces. His tortured spirit, now moved by resentment of oppression, now torn by grief for my distress, not for his own, has used hasty expressions, and he has wished that I should consult my own welfare (had it been possible) by leaving him. He has only been disturbed while he mourned the privations which I sustained; and thus his very anger was the undoubted child of love."

"You are mad, to defend one who has dealt so hardly by you."

"You are mistaken, or you would not thus accuse him. He never spoke harshly but when he was unhappy; and of late he has become less sad than formerly. Chance has thrown a friend in his way, who has prevailed over his scruples, and induced him to accept assistance."

"And do you know that friend?"

"I do not, sir."

"Then I will tell you something of the friendship from which you are weak enough to hope for comfort. The individual who so benevolently assists him is a female; and much I suspect—"

"Suspect! nay, spare further speech: Clifford has already suffered too much from suspicion."

"But suspicion may lead to truth."

"The truth, if sad, will come soon enough without the aid of such a leader."

"Are you then so tame as to endure even the shadow of the insult I believe he offers to you daily?"

"If it be tameness not to merit insult from my husband, by evincing want of confidence in him, I am so tame, that I would teach all who desire to arraign him to breathe their thoughts to any one but me."

"Elinor, I blush to call you mine."

"I am sad to hear it; but not to make you recal the harsh speech, would I so conduct myself, that my husband should blush to call me his."

"I believe it useless to say more. Your abject spirit

would want courage to rise against your tyrant, though clearest evidence were given of his falsehood."

"It might be so; for I should then suspect that his wanderings sprung from my imperfections."

"Away! I trusted I should find you cured of this love-sick folly. This senseless passion offends me."

"Think not so meanly of your own blood, nor look upon your daughter as the despicable slave of passion. I loved Clifford for his generous nature; and when the world conspired to blast his fame, I called him before the tribunal of my understanding. There he was acquitted,—and then I but sighed to share, if I could not mitigate his distress. I regret not the step I have taken. Above the world's pity and its scorn, I exult in the unsullied honour of my husband. He, by nature just and kind to all beside, will not be otherwise to me,—and on the rock of his worth I securely repose."

"Are you then content to grovel on in this ignominious poverty?"

"While he must endure it, I can bear it without repining. But in another land we look for happier fortunes. In a few days there is reason to believe that we shall be on our way to those rich countries beyond the western wave, where European knowledge cannot but give its possessor immense advantages, among the unlettered natives. There, teaching them the arts which adorn life, we may grow old in happy retirement, lost and forgotten by the unregretted world."

"Amazement! And are you prepared to cross the vast Atlantic!—to forego your native land for ever?"

"Why not! Can you wonder that those should desire an asylum among wild but not ferocious men who have suffered so much from civilized savages?"

"But have you reflected on the rugged scenes—the burning climate to which you would expose yourself?"

"I have, and am prepared for all. Through the wilderness and over the waste, I fear not to follow my husband. I can brave the ardour of the noonday sun, and the gloom of midnight. Though lions roar and serpents hiss around us, hope still will soothe the anxious bosom, and sacred love shall sustain the frame which else had sunk from weakness."

Sir Geoffrey was affected by the enthusiasm of his child. He replied in a subdued tone:—

"Though disobedient, Elinor, you still are mine. But I much lament this generous warmth has not been called forth by a more deserving object. Clifford, alas!—I know it but too well—is really unworthy, and—"

"If, sir, you would not deal harshly by your daughter, let your indignation fall on me, but speak not injuriously of my absent husband."

"Your husband is present to answer for himself," said Clifford, who now entered, and who had heard, as he approached, the latter part of the conversation. He looked proudly on Sir Geoffrey, but saluted him not. Clifford paused for the knight to proceed.

"Well, sir," Clifford at length said, "why should my presence check your speech? It is safe to calumniate me at all seasons."

The mean habiliments which the husband of his daughter wore, combined with the care and sorrow traced in his countenance, formed so strong a contrast to the gay and youthful Clifford, such as Sir Geoffrey had once known him, that he felt compassion strong in his bosom, and thus addressed the husband of his daughter:—

"Clifford, you have fearfully wandered in the path of shame. Yet I would fain forgive what I cannot forget. I spare that which might be said. In token of forgiveness take my hand."

"Not if it were an emperor's. I scorn forgiveness, not being guilty, and disdain to be endured, where I am not esteemed."

"I would mitigate the rigour of your destiny."

"I will not see it mitigated on such terms."

"I would lift you from the state of poverty and ignominy in which I find you."

"Sir, it needs not. I soon leave these shores for ever, but while here I stand no longer in relation to men as I did; and the opinions of others have not the influence on my conduct which they once possessed. I have had time to inquire what shame is, and I find that it is neither created nor removed by poverty or wealth. The unreflecting great may despise lowly industry; but I hold the meanest occupation illustrious, compared with servile dependance."

"It is folly to spurn kindness."

"It were baseness in the guiltless to receive it as mercy to a culprit."

"Thus perverse, you must remain in that state to which you have been so long consigned."

"Be it so; and much as I have been injured, I ought not to account myself unhappy. A rich inheritance and high connections were formerly the vessel of my fortune, which was charged with a cargo of matchless worth. The winds arose—my once triumphant bark perished in the storm. This was sad; but mine was the unlooked-for joy, to see the golden freight—the dazzling treasure,—which had given it tenfold value, spring of its own spontaneous motion from the wreck, and come with infinitely augmented value into my possession."

"What mean you?"

"Need I say, the peerless cargo of which I speak was Elinor. Thus favoured by Heaven, for myself I will not repine. Soon borne by favouring gales to other climes, I shall mock the impotent wrath of those who sought to crush me."

"Since to America you would take your course, I will provide that a band of gallant navigators shall be ready to transport you thither."

"Your care, sir, may be spared. All is arranged; and to-morrow, if the wind prove fair, I shall be in the bark which is to bear me hence."

Sir Geoffrey renewed his offers of service; but, as he expressed no opinion on Clifford's innocence, all were haughtily rejected. The father lingered long, and gazed with sadness on the poverty which surrounded his daughter, while he felt not a little disturbed by the perils to which she prepared to expose herself. He reflected that, in a few hours, she would be past recal. He was disposed to be bountiful, but could not own conviction that Clifford was guiltless; and Clifford, stern and uncompromising to the last, would receive no aid from one who held that opinion Sir Geoffrey avowed to be his.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

> ————There is one within,
> Besides the things, that we have heard and seen,
> Recounts most horrid sights.
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

When Lord Erpingham retired from the supposed remains of Edmund, he hastened to his home, and shut himself in his study for the day. Even-song was over—the domestics had all retired—and he supposed every one to sleep but himself, when the door of his study was cautiously opened, and Ferdinand entered.

The cautious silence with which he passed into the room, attracted Lord Erpingham's attention.

"I imagined," he said, "that you were sleeping."

"Be my other faults what they may, my lord," Ferdinand replied, "the reproach due to the sluggard belongs not to me."

"I spoke not in reproach; but the hour has arrived which commonly brings needful rest to all in this abode."

"Aye, my lord; but no hour brings me needful rest. What the present may do for me, I know not; but learning that your lordship proposed to sit up late, I judged this a fitting opportunity to wait on you."

"Your manner," Lord Erpingham replied, "has much of strangeness in it. I wish not to be interrupted in my meditations."

"I shall assist you in your meditations, and in a way which will surprise."

"Your tone is peremptory. This is not to be endured. I command you to withdraw."

"It must be endured, my lord, and I shall not withdraw.

"You become insolent: leave the room, or I will call the domestics."

"The call will be your last, then; for if you stir from the spot on which you now rest, or if you raise your voice but in the slightest degree above your ordinary tone, this dagger shall bind you to eternal silence."

Lord Erpingham started at seeing the deadly weapon produced from the bosom of Ferdinand.

"What can this mean?" he exclaimed: "have I an assassin in my house?"

"No, my lord. You err most egregiously. In me you see a minister of justice, who attends to execute a criminal, but no assassin."

"Some horrible malady has surely assailed your reason!"

"Would it were so! for I might then be stayed, and you survive."

"What monstrous enigma is this? That you, whom I have respected, I might almost say loved as my own blood, should thus intrude on the hours dedicated to solemn sorrow for a dear departed fellow-creature, and he your friend, confounds my understanding not less than it shocks my senses."

"It is that death, and the opportunity growing upon it, that brings me here at this hour. Sir, it is mine to recal scenes which you have consigned to forgetfulness. After you had retired, one came hither with a report, that the corpse you saw this day, was not that of Edmund, but that he had been murdered; and further, it was stated, that Egbert had destroyed him, and had been detected within the walls of his own monastery in wanton dalliance with a courtezan. These things, if true, prove tremendous depravity; and it now becomes my duty to trace the genealogy of the imputed crime, till I shew that the death of Edmund is offspring to the former guilt of Lord Erpingham."

"I have wished," Lord Erpingham replied, "so to conduct myself through life, that I might at the appointed time be ready to give death welcome. But to be murdered in cold blood, and on false pretences, is that for which I am but imperfectly prepared. Tell me the good you promise yourself from this deed:—tell me the price of it, and you shall have the gold you covet, without incurring the guilt of murder."

"Gold! far from seeking to obtain gold, I have some to restore. Here, my lord, with what I have received as pay, is what you have forced on me as gifts. Now I am nothing your debtor; for the bread which I have eaten in your house my labour has earned."

With these words he offered a purse to Lord Erpingham, who, regarding but the countenance of his accuser, saw it not. Ferdinand laid it on the table.

"I am more amazed than before!" Lord Erpingham exclaimed. "Have I been such an unfeeling tyrant to my

secretary, as to deserve that not even gold should be received in ransom for my blood ?"

"No, this is not imputed. I will do justice to your virtues as well as to the atrocities which are now to be expiated. As employer, (had no previous wrong been committed,) you had claimed affectionate attachment, and undying gratitude. I have also observed kindness to others. Oh! that you had ever been the same."

"Can you then admit that I have been kind to you, and to others, so far as you have seen, and yet be satisfied with nothing short of my destruction ?"

"It is even thus. I feel my task more painful than it would otherwise have been. I foresaw that it might be so, when Edmund first proposed that I should take employment here ; but I conquered my reluctance by reflecting that this would, in some sort, partake of mercy ; and by no other means could just vengeance be made so complete."

"Still incomprehensible !— How mercy and vengeance could be gratified by the same step, I understand not."

"Few words shall explain. Your death was decided on. Ere this you had fallen, but that I had become your inmate ; and being certain that you could not escape, was content to wait till I might approach you as I have now done. This was merey, because it spared you for some weeks of charitable labour ; and it contributes to vengeance, because it enables me to make you know that you fall by no common stabber's hand, and that when you feel my dagger's point, not rapine—not sudden waath, but just retribution—strikes the blow."

"Is it possible that such a return can be made for ad mitted kindness. Have I warmed a serpent in my bosom !"

"Talk you of a serpent ? Have you no acquaintance with one that formerly reposed on the softest, fondest breast that nature's hand had ever fashioned ? Let your thoughts travel some years back, my lord, and you shall then recal how she, round whom one serpent twined, was stung even to death. Shall I remind you of the beauty you wooed, and of the barbarity with which you destroyed the fair you had sworn to protect ? Can you forget how you left her to ferocious murderers,—if, indeed, it were not that ruthless hand which performed the fiend-like office, of giving to unearthly love its bloody recompense."

"What horrors are these! I cannot doubt but you refer to acts supposed to have been committed beyond the ocean,—acts of which I am not only innocent, but positively ignorant."

"Thou art old and crafty, but thou shalt in vain seek to over-reach me. It is mine to perform an awful part, to-night, and this is not a case in which argument can prevail. No plausibility can move me from my purpose; as well mightst thou try thine eloquence upon the warring winds, and reason with the storm."

"You know not what you do."

"Often have I sought to wake you to repentance, by describing and condemning guilt like yours, till I have almost disclosed the object of my coming. But, still callous, you have remained, outwardly at least, forgetful of the early depravity which now, though late, consigns you to the grave."

"I know your speech has often been mysterious, and I have called for explanation. But when you denounced crime, it affected not me. I am not more assured that I continue to exist, than I am that you are deceived."

"Impossible! Look on this portrait—is it not yours?"

Lord Erpingham started at recognising a miniature of himself, which he had not seen for many years.

"This is my portrait," he said. "It was the gift of love to one no longer on earth."

"It was indeed a gift to one no longer on earth—not of love, but of perfidy. Your features are too strongly marked by nature, and too accurately copied by art, to make it possible for me to mistake. Now look on me:—see you no trace of features once familiar?"

"They have often reminded me of one most dear."

"Of thy murdered wife?"

"Murdered!"

"That was the expression. Would I might recal it."

"By Heaven you may, for——"

"Peace, and hear me. I am the brother of that wife,—the son of Teutila, respecting whose death you once questioned me."

"Can it be possible!—Gracious God! am I awake?"

While speaking, Lord Erpingham sprung from his chair, with uncontrollable emotion, and advanced towards Ferdinand.

"Resume your seat, my lord, or you throw away the few moments I am disposed to allow you to survive."

Lord Erpingham sank backwards, almost swooning. Ferdinand continued—

"I am the son of that Teutila, whose daughter became your wife. Shall I remind you of your conduct, when, about to return to Europe, you blushed to meet the friends of your early life with an American partner?"

"This is all error."

"But the gold which you obtained through that wife, you were not ashamed to bring to your native country. That was safely carried on board ship, while its rightful mistress, with infamous, with hellish cruelty, was handed over to murderers, if the wounds which mangled her devoted form were not inflicted by you. This was the part acted by the pretended Don Gomez. You left your infant daughter helpless and destitute, and passed on board the vessel which brought you to Europe. Ought baseness like this to escape punishment?"

Lord Erpingham, gasping for breath, looked wildly on the speaker, but could make no reply. Ferdinand went on.

"When Teutila found himself dying, I, then a boy, was called to his side. He recounted to me the inhumanity and cowardice of Don Gomez, (for that was the name by which you were known) and made me swear a solemn oath to pursue the betrayer. 'The bones of Isabella'—so, by your wish, his daughter had been named—'lie still uncovered,' cried the dying cazique. 'Their gory bed has not been washed clean; the unappeased spirit will still cry against you, for vengeance. Sit not inactive on your mat, my son, but lift your hatchet, or grasp the dagger, to console the dead, and tell the imploring shade of your sister that her wrongs shall yet be revenged.'"

"This is an awful moment! but hear me—let me speak."

"Waste not thy breath in vain denial; thy fate is sealed. I took the oath, and will not be perjured. Though taught to reverence the Christian faith, I retain the thirst for vengeance of the tribe from which I spring. Timid and feeble as Europeans consider the children of America, they lack not resolution in a cause like this. The swamp, the river, the cane forest, and the mountain, have in vain interposed between my ancestors and the object of their resentment;

and the mighty barrier of the ocean has proved not sufficient to save you. I passed into Spain with the cousin of Teutila, and the daughter you had deserted."

"Lives she still? Was Mariana a daughter of mine?"

"She lives, but knows not that she has a father to reproach. That Mariana, whom you deserted, I have saved from the world, and devoted to the service of her Creator. In Spain I learned, after a long search, that the pretended Gomez was an Englishman. I waited, hearing you were expected on a mission to Madrid, and possessed myself of your language, with which I found I had unknowingly been made familiar in my infancy. You came not: I could pause no longer; I sought and found you here. Now you understand why I take your life. I am nothing amazed at the agitation which convulses your frame."

"The emotion you remark is not what you suppose. I have only to implore—"

"Implore nothing. I am sad that one of thy venerable aspect should fall beneath my hand; but that cannot avail. Seek not mercy from me; solicit it elsewhere;—but it is mockery to suggest this; for, Oh! what hope can a wretch cherish from a prayer addressed to the Father of all, who has shown no love, no pity, for the helpless one who might claim to call him parent?"

"I thank the Being to whom you would direct my thoughts, that I have not been so wanting in reflection through life, as to have failed to solicit him for support in death. Believe me, not for my own life now, but for thy soul, I plead."

"If guilt attach to the fulfilment of a solemn oath to punish crime, my soul must pay the penalty."

"I would save you from guilt of which you dream not—which you would tremble to incur—not the guilt of simple murder—but that of—"

"Of what old man?"

"Of parricide."

"Parricide! Terror has disordered thy brain, or thou wouldst not think to stay my arm by such a poor invention."

"Deem it not an invention; for, by my every hope of future mercy, I speak the truth. By the fierce throbs which agitate this bosom, if thou art he who was supposed to be the son of Teutila, thou seest in me thy father."

"Thou ravest!"

"Well may a father rave in the awful moment when he recognises his son—Oh! thought of horror!—in him who is about to become his assassin!—Hear me! hear me!"

"Before I came to this apartment I ascertained that all in the house besides were sleeping. Since delay cannot save, if still the foe of thine own soul, give utterance to the mad falsehood which thou art so anxious I should hear."

"I deny the imputed guilt which you have sworn to revenge. On the night which saw me leave Zempoalla, most true it is that I could not defend my Isabella."

"Enough: I am not curious to hear in what terms you would qualify your base desertion, if that were all."

"But I was not separated from her. Hers was the glory of bearing her wounded lord to the ship, in which he sailed with her, for Europe."

"Go on, my lord: this craft much diminishes the pity which I lately felt. Know, to thy confusion, that she whose blood now calls for thine was found barbarously slaughtered. Go on:—yet, on better reflection, I will not be accessary to thy deeper perdition. My mercy shall prevent thee from further sinning against truth."

"Let me explain."

"I have heard enough. I give thee one moment for prayer, for heavy is the load of guilt which rests upon thy soul. The desertion of thy wife and offspring has doomed me to a wandering life of sorrow; the lovely being who claimed from me an uncle's care, to the gloom of a convent; and, finally, through thy enormous crime, the gallant, generous Edmund has prematurely perished. Solicit pardon, but be brief, for I may no longer delay."

Lord Erpingham raised his eyes to Heaven, and gave his thoughts utterance in the form of a prayer:—

"Creator of man, forgive, forgive the mistaken son, now about to imbrue his hands in a father's blood. Oh! let not my death be remembered against him who knows not what he does."

"And darest thou, in thy final hour, thus mock the majesty of Heaven with impious falsehoods, fashioned into prayer?"

"To such daring I am unequal."

"Had'st thou been what thou pretendest to be, the fond, the anxious father, thou had'st not rested here in ease and affluence, unmindful of the fate of thy children."

"Nor have I ever abated my efforts to regain them. When Edmund went to Spain, he was charged with letters, to many who were recently from America, concerning this subject, so near to my heart."

"You have prudently named one who is dead, that I may not refer to him for proof. Yet that the assertion is false admits not of doubt; for if true, would he never have mentioned to me that he had been so occupied?"

"Matters which immediately concerned himself engaged his attention. Besides, he knew not at first that you were from America; and subsequently your impenetrable reserve baffled both him and me, when we ventured on inquiry. He who has just yielded up his spirit knew my anxiety, though he might forbear to name my sorrows, from fear that by doing so even to others, he might be the means of renewing them."

"This is plansibly urged, and Edmund cannot contradict."

"Would to Heaven it were lawful to invoke his shade to leave for one moment the world to which it now belongs! Might this be, his spectre would not hesitate to obey the summons, and attest the truth of what I have said."

"No more of this solemn trifling. This instant sees thee numbered with the dead, and gives thy soul, unprepared as it may be, to the awful punishment which awaits it."

Death seemed inevitable. Lord Erpingham made no effort to avoid the blow. His hands were clasped, his eyes were closed, and his undefended bosom was presented with the firmness of resignation to the weapon's point.

Ferdinand, while he gazed on the venerable being whom he devoted to destruction, felt a thrill of pity, which the ardour of his resentment had for a time prevented him from acknowledging, and his hand paused, reluctant to inflict the fatal wound. Reproaching his own weakness, he made a determined effort to shake it off.

"Guilty spirit,—now—now take thy flight!" he exclaimed, and his arm was impetuously raised:—it was descending, when the blood suddenly deserted his cheek,—the dagger fell from his nerveless hand,—his eyes glared wildly, as if

some ghastly object had been presented to them, too dreadful for mortal man to look upon and live; and shrinking back with shuddering alarm, which no language can describe, he faintly articulated—"Creator of man, save me!—save me!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Now say on, gentle frere;
Of thys tydyng
That ye me bryng
I long full sore to here."

SIR THOMAS MORE.

THOUGH Mr. Common Hunt paid the greatest attention to Edmund, not all his kindness, nor even the captivating display of the powers of his most accomplished pupils, could make the day which our hero had to pass at the Lord Mayor's dog-house other than tedious in the extreme. He sighed for the fearful period which had yet to elapse, before the approach of night.

Mr. Common Hunt had procured a messenger to carry a letter to Lord Erpingham. After some hours were wasted, he returned, having been unable to find his way to Fickett's-fields. Sent back with more particular directions, he brought news that Lord Erpingham was from home, and brought with him the note which he had been charged to give into his lordship's own hands.

Edmund would have sought his noble friend himself, but was unwilling to venture forth in his monastic dress. The clothes of Mr. Longthong were so small, that he could not wear them; and the neighbourhood of Finsbury was not so well provided with tailors before the middle of the sixteenth, as it is in the nineteenth century. He was therefore constrained to remain where he was.

The last ray of light had not quite vanished, when the impatient Edmund, having thanked Mr. Common Hunt for his civility, which he promised to acknowledge shortly in a more appropriate way, prepared to recross the fields he had traversed in the morning. The door of the dog-house was

about to close, when a gay imitation of the crowing of a cock was heard. Edmund took no notice of it; but Mr. Common Hunt, with equal surprise and pleasure, exclaimed,

"Cock's body! my master, but it's right well that you did not leave sooner, for there is the merry note of Nick Bray himself." The jester, who now made his appearance, proved that the ear of Mr. Common Hunt had not deceived him.

"I am glad," said Edmund, "to see you here; I was fearful that some discovery would take place."

"Marry, and discoveries have taken place, such as would startle that great discoverer, Giovanni Gaboto, or Cabot, as common people, no reflection on you, Mr. *Common* Hunt, call him. After all the pains I took with Billy de Broke, they found out that it was not you."

"This I expected."

"But as I expected, they did not find it out in time to cut off your retreat; nor did they discover that I had any hand in beautifying him; nor did they suspect his transmogrification to have been effected, as you know it was, by *Old Nick*."

"Then what drove you to quit the monastery so early."

"Simple apprehension, and favourable opportunity. Oh, I have such tidings! But to tell you a secret, Master Dicky Longthong, I have made but a shy sort of dinner; and as fasting is not that religious ceremony, on the observance of which I most pride myself, I shall not be above eating with you."

"It nothing displeases me," said Mr. Common Hunt, "to find that you have neither lost your stomach nor your spirits."

"That is no bad speech; though it falls short of that which was sometimes addressed to mine organ of hearing by old Cavendish, when I was fool to my lord Cardinal."

"What might that be?"

"Why it ran thus: 'Our lord being meditative, and much engaged in writing, will not forth from his closet, and will nothing for refection there, save an orange; wherefore, of his singular grace and favour, he bids us to dine for him,—and so, master fool, sit down and eat thy fill.'"

"The last part I will say, as lustily as he could say it, if you give me but time."

"Time!—O you are unreasonable to expect an hungry man will give time: I would sooner give pence."

"Wait but till I have killed a capon."

"In sooth, not I; for I am not disposed to take his feathers for a *warner*, and cannot wait till he is fairly stripped of them and spitted. But judging you would be thus circumstanced, I ordered at the tavern within the gate, hard by Coleman-street, (where I changed my apparel,) half a dozen pigeons, a coney, and a goose, to be dressed while I came hither to bid you to supper."

"I cannot with you," said Edmund; "for me each moment seems an hour till I reach Lord Erpingham."

"You are impatient, I know, to pour justice on the villain Egbert. But cease to be the unmanageable colt you have been. You *shall* to supper with me, for I have much to tell."

"What mean you? I am all impatience."

"So am I—for supper. Now, if you repine so at waiting for a tale, what ought I to do, who am detained from a meal? When impatience to hear is opposed to impatience to feed, the two must fight it out as well as they can; but cross you the field with me, and we shall soon make peace between them, and satisfy both."

Though reluctant to postpone his visit to Lord Erpingham, Edmund accompanied Bray to the tavern, whither they were followed by Mr. Common Hunt.

"Now then shall you know," cried the jester, "how I have proceeded; but first take a horn of this wine, it is so good, that where I the host here, being settled and married, I would never be a day without two horns, so my wife objected not, which were most unlikely."

"Now to your narrative."

"The narrative shall come; but Heaven be praised the supper comes first, Now each man take his pigeon, or his part, nothing heeding how his fellows fare; so shall my discourse be poured forth, without further interruption than graceful mastication may from time to time occasion, at which none may be chafed."

"Proceed."

"Such is my purpose. Where did I leave off?"

"Before the beginning," said Edmund, with some impatience.

"That," said Bray, "will do right well for you to say, who are of gentle blood; for though he uses not good discretion who flatters youth, I pause not to say, a speech which sets forth that a man hath left off even before he has begun, would not be disliked in the mouth of a fool. This well reminds me of what my Lord of Wiltshire said one day; he was father to Queen Anne, whose head being considered but a sort of useless ornament to her person—"

"I pray thee, trifle not. Thy tongue hath not of late thus ambled; and now that I would have thee more grave, thou art like one half beside himself."

"That is true, I will admit; but expect not me to be grave to-day, for I am half drunk with joy, which to say truth, is so intoxicating in its nature, that I cannot but acknowledge the wisdom of Heaven, in allowing man to drink of it but seldom."

"Detain me not," cried Edmund.

"You shall know then, that having deemed it wise to follow you, I availed myself of the opportunity afforded by the search made in all the vaults for Edmund, to pass into the house of the pepperer; and there, wishing in the street to look like an honest man, I took the liberty to steal a cloak and hat, leaving my friar's garb behind. I had been here some hours ago, but passing on my way through Lothbury, I saw a varlet with a horse, who entertained a crowd with prodigies."

"Heed not feats of horsemanship."

"I speak not of such, but of traits of knowledge, such as would speak this same animal, dumb though he be, as rational as I am."

"Go on with thy tale."

"Nay, I go on with his tail; for after he had danced most gracefully in silver shoes, asks me the scapegrace master, which was the greatest rogue in all that company?—whereupon comes my gentleman round to where I stood, and gives me a whisk in the face with his long tail that almost cut out my eyes, and thus pointed me to all the crowd, as the biggest varlet then present."

"Truly this horse must have much knowledge," Mr. Common Hunt remarked.

"Marry, but this was nothing to what followed. 'Tell me,' quoth the master, 'what number of pence ought to be

paid for a quart of good sack wine in merry England?' which hearing, the learned beast lifted up one of his fore feet, and struck the ground thrice. 'Nay,' quoth the fellow, 'in that thou liest; forasmuch as thou tellest me threepence. That is the extravagant price which knavish taverners demand; but I would know what ought to be paid.'"

"And what followed upon that?" demanded Mr. Common Hunt, looking from the goose, which, holding a leg with one hand, (forks not being then in use,) he was about to divide with the knife which he grasped in the other.

"Upon that," resumed Bray, "the creature taking time, as it seemed, to have better thought on the matter, paused a pretty while, and presently gave the ground two buffets with his hoof, thereby avouching that the quart of wine should not cost more than twopence."

"This concerns not me," Edmund remarked.

"But what follows much imports you, or I had not detained you thus."

"Then to it straight."

"I shall; but take one cup of wine, for it shall much refresh thee, and even while you swallow it my tale shall arrive at conclusion."

"I will away, if you thus trifle."

"Tarry," cried the jester, rising to detain the restless Edmund, "and I will be brief in very truth; like to the skip of a flea, my tongue shall bound forward. So, passing over the miraculous skill with which the horse pointed out which was a gentle, and which but a working knave; which maiden sighed for a husband, and which should presently have one; which card showed a king, and which but only a valet; at last demands the fellow,—'And now I would know how many good monasteries there be?' The beast snorted. —'Tell me how many honest nuns all the convents contain.' Again he snorted, lifted up his foot, and paused before he put it down, as if he would say—'One, perchance, but I doubt it.' So the people laughed and said, 'The horse was no slanderer.' And now the owner bawled, 'Tell me, on thy good faith, how many concubines doth John White the prior, commonly called the Bull of Bermondsey, entertain at this present?' Then began the horse to number them with his foot, beating the ground more than twenty times."

"But what has this to do with the subject of my concern?"

"Much: for the people cried out the horse was right; some said he ought to be burned for his diabolical knowledge; but all exclaimed against the prior of Bermondsey. Whereupon said I, 'The abbot of Leadenhall not less deserves your notice; for from his house it is known that a communication has been opened with the neighbouring convent, by which the priests of the Trinity pass to comfort the nuns of St. Helen, by other means than confession. The cry was repeated, and ran through the whole assembly like wild-fire. Marry, said they, all monasteries ought to be pulled down, and that it would be a glorious commencement to deal with the convent of St. Helen. So some of the crowd ran that way."

"What followed?"

"Why the rest of the rabble, with me in the thick of them. Marvellous to relate! when they got to Bishopsgate, there were the king's commissioners, just entering the building to inquire into the concerns of the same. The mob rushed in—and what think you followed?"

"My wit is no more: I cannot guess; so unfold what you would say, without seeking conjecture from me, and do it with speed."

"Your pardon, Edmund, but I must needs make pause, or thy pale, sad, and languid countenance will be so rudely convulsed by sudden mirth, it shall be impossible to restore thy features again to proper composure. They found the pious Egbert in the convent, locked in the close embrace of a young and marvellously beautiful nun."

"Indeed!"

"It is true I can avouch, for I myself saw the lovers hunted out; and truly, from the glimpse I had of the girl, Egbert's taste was not bad in making such a selection. I saw her but for a moment, but more time was not wanting to determine that she was pretty."

"What has befallen the rest of the sisterhood?"

"That I know not; only this one was turned out for the sport of the mob: but still you doubt, for you laugh not. I saw them forth with my own eyes; so be merry: I saw them both; and the name of the nun I afterwards found was sister Mariana."

Had a thunder-bolt fallen, Edmund could not have evinced more sudden emotion than was called forth by this

intelligence. He was speechless for some moments; and when able to question Bray on the subject again, receiving but a confirmation of his previous statement, he offered no reply, but rushed out of the house in a state of frenzy not to be described.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he ran to the convent. He learned that the whole of the sisterhood had been expelled, but of the course taken by the nun who had been given to the fury of the mob, he heard so many contradictory reports, that he could place confidence in none.

Several hours were consumed in profitless inquiry before he again thought of directing his steps to Lord Erpingham. It was late when he reached Fickett's Fields. There was every appearance of the whole family having retired to rest for the night. By the front he could gain no admission; but having an exact knowledge of the premises, he found no difficulty in making his entrance behind, from the lane which has more than once been named, which connected Fickett's Fields and Chancery Lane. He perceived a light in one room, which he knew to be Lord Erpingham's study: thither he proceeded in silence; and just as Ferdinand had raised his arm to strike a mortal blow, Edmund opening the door presented himself before his astonished friend, pale as a spectre from sickness, fatigue, and grief,—the living picture of despair.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"The paleness of united rage and sorrow overspread his face; he tottered feebly from the violence of his emotion, and large drops, rage distilled, stood on his sternly furrowed brow."

Highways and By-ways.

The door by which Edmund entered was behind the chair in which Lord Erpingham sat, so that the latter saw not the apparition which had produced so fearful an impression on Ferdinand. The violent and sudden agitation of the latter, and the falling dagger, forced themselves on his attention; and the still wildly glaring, though averted eye of Ferdinand,

directed him to the cause of that which filled him with amazement. He saw alive the youth he had mourned as dead, but wearing so ghastly an aspect, that he seemed to have come there but to die.

Nor was Edmund less astonished than those whom he had surprised. He expected to find Lord Erpingham alone; to have seen Ferdinand there at all would have amazed; but to find the favoured secretary of the peer, his own preserver and friend, and the near relation of Mariana, about to plunge a dagger in the undefended bosom of his liberal benefactor, appeared so monstrous, that he actually doubted the evidence of his senses, while he beheld the resignation of Lord Erpingham, and the fiery wrath, succeeded by horrible consternation, which marked the deportment of Ferdinand.

"What can this mean?" he exclaimed; "are all men mad!—are all the opposites of what they seem!"

"Edmund!—and living!" cried Ferdinand; and he advanced as if he would have resumed his dagger.

Edmund stepped forward to prevent Ferdinand from taking the weapon from the ground.

"What mean you, madman?" he demanded.

"I would fulfil an oath; and execute just vengeance on a wretch who has no right to life."

"Your senses are bewildered by the misery which has fallen on Mariana: such language can have no application to Lord Erpingham."

"Unhappily, for his own sake," said Lord Erpingham, "Ferdinand is of a different opinion, out of which he cannot be reasoned."

"You speak truth; you cannot reason me into perjury."

"Yet perjury itself were scarcely worse than murder," Edmund remarked.

"None can shrink from murder with more abhorrence than I do; but the virtuous avenger of a dear wronged relative, while shedding the blood of her destroyer, takes not that crime upon his soul."

"I abhor the crime, and detest the perpetrator," cried Edmund, "with as much sincerity of hatred as you can do; but what vengeance were it to direct your wrath against Lord Erpingham? He was not the wretch who sought Mariana's destruction."

"I speak not of Mariana," said Ferdinand; "she, I have been so happy as to place beyond the reach of danger."

"Indeed! have you then seen her?"

"Seen her?"

"Did Mariana find you, when forced from her convent?"

"Of what do you speak?" demanded Ferdinand, who, alarmed for Mariana, forgot for a moment the purpose which till then had wholly occupied his mind.

"Can it be possible that you have not yet heard of the baseness of Egbert?"

"Egbert!" repeated Ferdinand, who at the mention of the name remembered with horror what he had heard in connection with it that night. "What of him?—What of Mariana!"

"I know not how to frame my speech to meet the ear of a fond relative; but have you nothing learned of the false ecclesiastic being this day surprised in the convent of St. Helen?"

"You hesitate to pour into my ear all you have learned. What dreadful sequel remains behind."

"Alas! it is my affliction to know that he was found with Mariana, (some vile contrivance of his, I doubt not, caused her to be alone with him,) and thereupon she was led forth with reproach, and exposed to the coarse mockery of an inflamed multitude."

"Gracious God!" cried Lord Erpingham, starting from his chair, and clasping his hands with an expression of the most heart-rending agony, "can it be possible that in one eventful hour I should discover my long-sought children, who might have become the joy of my declining day, only to see one lift his hand against his parent's life, and to know the other given up to the outrages of a thoughtless populace!"

Ferdinand seemed like one stunned. He staggered, and stretched out his hands for support.

"A dizziness has come over me," he cried; "I cannot see the objects before me. Am I still on earth? It is scarcely possible! This must be hell; and those who pass for men are fiends of darkness."

"I know not but it is," said Lord Erpingham. "I cease to recognise the ordinary feelings of human beings in the enormities pressed in frightful succession on my startled

senses. I hoped I had endured enough in my younger days to appease the wrath which my wanderings had provoked, and little deemed that an avenging God would rise thus terrible in his anger to punish my transgressions."

"You speak incoherently, my lord," replied Edmund; "nor can I marvel that you do so. The situation in which I found you might be sufficient to shake reason; then, to see one whom you thought to behold no more, start as it were from the grave, and lastly, to learn that your revered friend, Egbert, stands proved one of the vilest miscreants on earth, and consequently to know, that your despised nephew has been of all men living most cruelly outraged, accounts but too well for your wandering speech."

"It is you, Edmund, who know not of what you speak. For Clifford—poor Clifford, my heart may well bleed, but not even his melancholy fate can press so heavily on it as that which you have witnessed here."

"I confess, my lord, my own grief has been augmented, and my wonder excited, to see a weapon threatening your days, grasped by the hand of one from whom you merited boundless gratitude and devotion."

"But he," said Lord Erpingham, "who was about to number me with the dead, has proved himself to be no other than my own child, and the brother of Mariana, his supposed niece."

"What new wonders fill my ears! Can it be possible that you speak the language of reason?"

"Aye, and of truth. The being so fondly loved, now a destitute, if not—dreadful thought!—a guilty wanderer, is no other than my daughter."

"Can it be, then, that Ferdinand and Mariana are those respecting whom your inquiries have been multiplied through so many years?"

Ferdinand now spoke. "In the midst of that horrible whirlwind of surprise and misery which has assailed me, and almost bereft me of all my faculties, sounds have struck on my ear which thrill me, I know not why, with a sensation against which I thought myself sufficiently fortified. Unappealed to for such purpose, you, Edmund, have but now spoken that which confirms what I rejected as fabrication some few moments since. Your name was mentioned, and Lord Erpingham asserted that you could corroborate

what he had stated. I believed he would not have ventured this, but that he knew you to be dead, and I scorned the supposed artifice."

"I had used fewer words," said Lord Erpingham, "for my own life, than I lately uttered to save a son from crime."

"My lord, my lord, I know not what to say. I know not whether still to suspect, condemn, and pursue, or to fall at your feet in penitence for the past. Even now, as though it were but recent, I remember the awful moments which preceded the death of Teutila. I recal the anguish with which I reflected that I was about to lose for ever the father from whom I derived existence. Could he so fearfully deceive me in his last moments? No—no; it could not be. He could not seek to arm me against a guiltless parent. Besides, it now occurs to me, that others saw the mangled remains of my sister; and having neither intersts to pursue nor revenge to gratify, they bore testimony to the truth of what he told."

"I should doubt of gaining belief, if it were not in my power to furnish proofs so unequivocal of that which negatives the charge on which Teutila's resentment was grounded, that you shall not he able for an instant to question them."

"You may be able to make it probable that Isabella fell not by your hand, but you cannot—so I must still venture to say,—prove that you did not consult your own safety by leaving her to her fate; and there is little difference between the guilt which boldly strikes the victim, and the cowardice which basely betrays to the murderous arm of another."

"The dismal confusion which we all have shared, is not dispelled for me," said Edmund. "You talk of crimes familiarly, the remote mention of which makes humanity shudder. What connection can there be between these and Lord Erpingham?"

Lord Erpingham replied, "For no consideration peculiar to myself would I now waste one moment in speech. But, Ferdinand, it is most important that you should know that Teutila was deceived, and up to this hour you have lived in error with respect to my conduct."

"I know not how to act: I would not hear a dead parent aspersed, nor would I continue, if such I have ever been, the enemy of a father who lives. I cannot persuade myself that

Teutila would wantonly blacken your character in his dying hour; but, on the other hand, the warm emotion which I now remark cannot be assumed. Oh! my lord, I will not think you can add such hypocrisy, even if guilty, to your other sins."

"At all events listen to me for a few moments. When I shall bring conviction to your mind, we can better unite to seek Mariana. Resume your weapon, Ferdinand, now you are calm and can listen; and if, when I have ended, you still regard me as one against whom vengeance ought to be directed on account of Isabella, by him who gave me being, and who, as he is the Creator, will be the Judge of all, I swear unrepiningly to yield my bosom to your dagger."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

So after that he long had her complained,
His hondis wronge, and said that was to say,
And with his tearis salt her breast berained,
He gan those tearis wipin off full drey.

CHAUCER.

FERDINAND and Edmund awaited the narrative of Lord Erpinghami, who, after a pause, to recal in their proper order the events of past years, spoke as follows.

"Imagine not when I name Fernando Cortes, that I am about to enter into the details of Spanish conquest. Some matters connected therewith must be mentioned; but on these I will not enlarge."

"It was my hap to study at Salamanca, while the daring Cortes was in that city. Subsequently, circumstances, which I will not recount, carried me to Trinidad, and there, most unexpectedly, I again saw my old acquaintance at the head of an armament which had been fitted out from Cuba, to prosecute the wonderful discoveries in the new continent, which had just filled the world with amazement.

"The delightfully romantic prospects held out by such an expedition allured adventurers of all ranks, to embark in them their wealth with their persons.

"Cortes invited me to share in the enterprise which he had been appointed to conduct. Little persuasion was needed to prevail on one of my ardent character, to avail himself of the favourable opportunity for beholding foreign lands, which rumour madly described as a fairy region, replete with all the attractions which might suffice to form another Paradise. I consented to become the companion of the Spanish commander, and to avoid awakening jealousies among the other followers of Cortes, it was determined that I should pass for a Spaniard, under the title of Don Gomez.

"We soon saw St. Juan de Ulua, landed, and commenced our intercourse with the natives. I will not describe our reception, or the mutual astonishment which our arms, horses, and appearance, and their wealth and simple manners inspired. These are matters of general history, and I therefore proceed to what immediately connects itself with my own fortunes on our arrival at Zempoalla.

"The crafty Cortes, soon ingratiated himself with the natives, and excited them to rebel against their monarch. From Zempoalla he advanced against the Tlascalans, but unwilling to confide too much in his new friends, he left me at Zempoalla with a small party to guard against treachery. I found them the simple confiding beings they appeared. Curious to witness their mode of living, I cultivated the friendship of the cazique, and mingled with his family. I deemed not that I risked much by doing so, but I soon found my peace of mind was gone. His daughter was lovely. The scorching sun of that climate had respected her bewitching features, and she might have vied with the proudest beauties of Europe.

"The efforts which she made to instruct me in the language of the country endeared her to my heart—in a word, I loved. We were married according to the forms used in Europe; blest with the society of one as amiable in her disposition as fascinating in her person, I exulted in perfect happiness; and when Cortes ordered the destruction of the ships, which had carried us hither, to cut off all retreat, none felt less regret that I did, than a step so decisive had been taken.

"The Tlascalans having been conquered, and converted into allies, Cortes and his followers advanced to Mexico. My wife, who at my request had been baptized by the name of Isabella, would not separate from me, but resolutely

followed the army through that painful and fatiguing march. She repined not at the hardships which she sustained; but she now became less capable of bearing them than formerly. The moment drew near when Isabella was to become a mother, and this inclined her to listen to my earnest persuasions to return to Zempoalla. I obtained leave to conduct her thither, but I found it impossible to do so. At Tlascala she was compelled to close her journey; and there she gave birth to a son. I rejoined the army, but as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to move, I had sufficient influence with the commander to get myself sent on a mission to Zempoalla. Thither I succeeded in conveying Isabella. On gaining the abode of the cazique, we found it the seat of mourning. A child about two months old, the offspring, not of the mother of Isabel, but of a second wife, had expired that night. This incident, at a period so remote, may seem of little moment, but few words will suffice to prove it of vast importance.

The inhabitants of Zempoalla, generally, had now learned to look on the Spaniards with very different feelings from those which they had formerly cherished. Instead of regarding them as children of the sun, and as more than mortal, they considered them a band of depredators, who fled from their own sterile shore or from the ocean, to ravage a fertile country. The *Accursed Race*, and the *Scum of the Sea*, were the appellations bestowed on those who had lately been almost worshipped. The mad thirst for rapine which had degraded the adherents of Cortes, produced this change.

The cazique, while he condemned the misconduct of the Spaniards, did not confound me with those who perpetrated outrages in which, thank God, I never participated; but he foresaw that others would not make a like distinction, and he trembled for the safety of an infant which derived the breath of life from me.—A thought,—a happy one, we considered it, suggested itself: he proposed that my infant should be received as his, while his child was interred as mine.

"I have now explained the circumstances which caused you, Ferdinand, to be looked upon as the son of Teutila. As yet I have produced no voucher for the truth of my narrative, but this shall not be wanting. The scenes of blood through which Cortes waded to sustain the first efforts of

his ambition, I have no leisure to pourtray. This I may remark, that many of his actions which were most revolting to humanity, were not impolitic. I freely, during all the years I remained there, inveighed against those which I deemed cruel. My frankness produced in him but momentary irritation, and had the effect of winning his entire confidence.

"It was through this, that, when in consequence of the reports made to his prejudice at Madrid, he had reason to expect the commissioners who had been sent out, would soon receive instructions to put him under arrest, he entreated me to visit Spain with dispatches from him, there to offer such representations as I felt justified in making with respect to his fidelity to his king. If Cortes had forgotten humanity, he never ceased to be loyal. I was shocked at the insolence with which he treated the Mexican kings, and the stern barbarity which consigned a number of brave men to the flames for making that resistance to the Spaniards which it was their duty to offer. Such conduct seemed to me more like the raging fury of a demon than the wrath of a man. It was in vain Cortes maintained that the terrible infliction which sacrificed a few Indians, would prove the means of saving the lives of hundreds of Spaniards, and was therefore an act of mercy. My opinion remained unchanged, nor could I bring myself to a belief, that to accomplish any object, or to guard against any danger, *humanity* would have recourse to such frightful means; but while the barbarity of my old companion disgusted, to his king—to Spain, he was faithful; and if his cruelties have stained her name, his aim while committing them was to confirm her sway.

"The ship in which I was to depart was ready to sail. I purposed taking my son and (a second child having been borne to me,) my daughter, then but a few months old, with me, that they might be educated in Europe. For this purpose I was on my way from the vessel to Zempoalla, when I and the few individuals with me found ourselves suddenly attacked by a body of men, employed, as I was subsequently assured, by the Spanish commissioners, to prevent my proceeding to execute the mission with which I stood charged. I was severely wounded; and, incapable of defending myself, had nearly fallen from loss of blood. It was then that Isabella proved her courage equal to her love: she scorned

to consult her own safety by flight, but boldly remained to sustain and assist her disabled husband. Through her generous efforts, with much difficulty I was conveyed to the ship, and the mariners fearing some new attempt would be made to detain them, commenced their voyage. When I recovered health and recollection, so far as to be conscious of my situation, the ship was already far away from the western continent.

"Not to pause on the events which detained me in Madrid, and the profitless way in which some years of my life were consumed, I hasten to that which must interest you as well in your real as in your supposititious character. Weary of Spain, I brought Isabella to England.—You start, and the frown of incredulity again lowers on your brow; but your scepticism shall be speedily at an end. I say, I brought my beloved wife to England: her health, alas! declined.—I hoped her children, for whom I had sent, would arrive to cheer and revive their fond mother; but I had news that Teutila was no longer at Zempoalla."

"It is true," Ferdinand said, "that Teutila was for a season compelled to leave Zempoalla during my childhood, but his absence was not protracted beyond a year."

"In the interim, my agent had received the intelligence which I have mentioned. I would have sought Teutila myself, but I could not quit Isabella in the situation to which she was reduced. At last it was my affliction to see her cut off in her prime. Mine was the sad duty to close her dying eyes. You have seen me weeping over the spot which contains her dust; and gazed with me on the statue which faintly commemorates her beauties. Little did I dream, while your eyes rested on that image, that you were contemplating the sculptor's record of the features of your mother."

"Few words remain to be added:—when no longer detained by the sick couch of a declining wife, I prepared to seek those who might best remind me of the treasure I had lost. It was then that I received the news that Teutila was dead, and that my children were no longer on the American shore. That alone detained me in Europe; but my inquiries have been continued up to this day, faint as the hope had grown, that mine would yet be the joy of shedding the tear of parental love on my long lost offspring."

"Your narrative is consistent, my lord," said Ferdinand; "but—"

"You would say, you look in vain for the proofs which I have promised.—These shall be forthcoming."

Lord Erpingham produced a small packet of papers: Ferdinand glanced at them, and perceived that they purpoted to be written by the deceased Lady Erpingham. It was in the form of a narrative of her life in England; in the course of which frequent mention was made of the ceaseless kindness of her lord."

"These papers," said Ferdinand, "bring no conviction to my mind; they indeed bear evident marks of coming from one who was well acquainted with that part of the world in which I first saw the light; but it follows not that they were written by her whose name is attached to them."

"But what motive could any one have for forging them? These are not the work of a moment; and could I have anticipated that they were likely to be wanted on an occasion like this?"

"It is not probable, my lord. But writing was an accomplishment of which Isabella had hardly attempted to possess herself while she remained at Zempoalla, and I can therefore form no judgment of the value of these papers from any remark I am enabled to make on the characters traced on them."

"But," said Edmund, "when no motive can be assigned for the production of such a narrative, ought a doubt to remain?"

"Yes; for though it is difficult to imagine a motive for doing what has been done, I can easier suppose these writings to have been forged from mere wantonness and folly, than I can believe them to have been furnished here in England by one who, before the date of them, had been murdered in America."

"If," Edmund remarked, "you hold proofs like these as nothing, I know not what can convince you."

"What I shall next produce," said Lord Erpingham, taking from a drawer a picture, which he now laid before Ferdinand, who started at the sight.

"This," said he, "is indeed a surprise! That painting is the exact resemblance of one which I have brought with me to Europe, by means of which I was enabled to recog-

nise your countenance on the day when I was wounded by the archer."

"A painting like this was executed by Isabella in her native country. From the circumstances under which we came to Europe, we had no opportunity of bringing it with us. I requested her to reproduce it, and my likeness in Spanish costume, such as she saw me at the time of our marriage, with her own, attired as as she was on that memorably happy day, she accordingly painted here."

"I cannot doubt that this was indeed the production of her pencil. The unrivalled delicacy of her touch, which I remark, assure me that it can have been painted by none but her."

Lord Erpingham then produced another picture. In this Isabella had represented herself surrounded with English objects of splendour, clasped in the arms of a fond husband, but looking with regret towards two children, separated from her by the ocean. A vessel then on the point of sailing at the command of her lord, prepared to direct its course that way, as it should seem for the purpose of reclaiming them.

"Doubt and suspicion are no more," cried Ferdinand; "these Mexican characters explain to me that Isabella, blest in every thing but the society of her children, was living in England, the happy wife of Lord Erpingham.—Oh, my lord! my father I may call you now, on my knees I pray forgiveness; and further, implore you to join me in supplicating the offended Majesty of Heaven to pardon the wretched son whose arm was lifted against the bosom of his parent."

"Rise, my son," cried Lord Erpingham, lifting Ferdinand from the floor, on which he had prostrated himself;—"Rise! A dismal oath, founded on false information, had nearly betrayed you into the commission of crime. But a God of mercy knows how to pardon error. Would I had sooner known my children were so near me! but why are you called Ferdinand, and she Mariana?"

"It was the wish of Teutila, after the mangled and disfigured body which we mistook for that of Isabella had been found, that we should cease to bear the names of Charles and Henrietta, which once were ours, and we received Mexican appellations. Subsequently we were baptized at Madrid by those which now belong to us."

"But for that, I should have had my attention sooner drawn to you, and a happy discovery had terminated all sorrow, for my inquiries would have conquered reserve, and Mariana would not have been exposed to peril."

"Alas my lord, I fear, had you pressed me too closely, I should have hastened to deprive you of life, from a fear that the execution of my purpose might be prevented, if you once came to suspect my relationship to Teutila. Both of us would long since have perished, you as my victim, and I in the character of your murderer."

Lord Erpingham said, "I wish to recognize the merciful interposition of Providence. Fain would I hope, that it will not terminate here, and that we may yet regain the object of our common solicitude, such as a father, a brother, and a lover could desire to see her."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Weak as thou art, yet hapless must thou know
The toils of flight, or some severer woe!"

COLLINS.

WHILE Lord Erpingham, Ferdinand, and Edmund were distracted with doubts and fears growing on the absence of Mariana, she remained at the house to which she had been conducted, a prey to miserable rumination, appalling wonder, and indescribable alarm. However confused her notion of the particular peril which awaited her, she could not forget what she had beheld; and considering the human face which she had seen to be the terrifying evidence of murder, and remembering the way in which it had been removed, it seemed past a doubt that evil was intended.

With this impression on her mind, she was anxious to quit the house. For that purpose she stole from her chamber shortly after midnight. She crossed the landing and approached the stairs, when she perceived a light in an apartment, the door of which opened on the staircase. Mariana judged it prudent to return to her apartment, and wait some time longer.

When another hour had elapsed, and she had returned to the landing, she saw the light as before, and heard the voice of the female by whom she had been so cordially received. She could even distinguish her expressions. Her tone was vehement and impassioned, while she exclaimed:

"They cannot recal thee to life! Thou canst yield no more suffering to gratify vengeance."

"Thy veins have been drained!" the voice continued. "Be thy blood on the head of the shedder."

The daring impiety which seemed to exult with fiendlike joy in the recollection of murder, inspired horror, even more insupportable than the terror which had before seized on the astonished Mariana. She stumbled, and had nearly fallen. The noise she made in endeavouring to save herself, led her to expect instant discovery. Again the timid fugitive shrunk back from the chamber in which she had wasted the preceding hours. Long afraid to venture forth, when at length she did so, Mariana had little expectation of finding circumstances more favourable to the flight she meditated. But she had summoned all her resolution, and was determined in any case to attempt leaving the house. There was no longer any appearance of a lamp kept burning, and day began to dawn.

She descended the stairs, and in a few seconds was so fortunate as to reach the door. She carefully unlocked it, when she found it was still held fast by a bolt, which on being partially withdrawn emitted a harsh creaking sound. Mariana feared the noise would wake the mistress of the house, and dared not even breathe while listening to ascertain if she moved. Mariana thought she heard a footstep, and immediately after, was certain that a door had been unlocked. Not doubting but her movements were observed, she made a new effort to return the bolt, when the noise which it had previously caused was renewed. Some one was on the stairs. Mariana looked and beheld a female form. She could not doubt that it was the being who had alarmed her, and whose well known voice now thrilled her own frame, while it demanded,

"Is any one there?"

Mariana did not answer. The demand was repeated.

"Who is it tries the bolt?"

Mariana hesitated no longer, but forced the bolt back.

"Art thou my lodger—art thou the timid one I last night received?" the voice now inquired.

"I am she," Mariana replied, at the same moment springing from the door, and leaving the house without daring to throw a glance behind.

"Whither wouldst thou?—what has disturbed thee? tarry I say, and speak."

But the call was vain. Having, as she believed, effected her escape from a dreadful prison, Mariana thought not of explanation, but fled.

An hour's flight had removed her to some distance from Greenwich. Traversing the bank of the river, it was no trifling source of grief to know her situation such, that to her all paths which might present themselves were the same.

Mariana had but just ventured to abate that speed which she had considered essential to her safety, when she saw a boat approach. The man who was in it landed, approached, and accosted her.

"Why are you forth so early, fair one?" he inquired; addressing himself to her with the air of one who did not meet her for the first time.

Mariana made no answer. She did not even look towards the speaker, but quickened her pace with agitation not to be described, for she knew the voice to be that of the individual who had seemed to befriend her, by conducting her to the dwelling which she had just left. To her disturbed mind it seemed clear, that the woman from whom she had resolved to fly, had despatched her accomplice to cut off her retreat.

In this idea she was fully confirmed, when she heard herself called upon in a loud voice not to go forward; and perceived that the speaker was rapidly following.

"Your pardon, lady, for my boldness," he said; "but I cannot meet you here thus early, and see you in such strange disorder, without detaining you for a moment."

"Forbear—forbear!" she exclaimed; "I seek not to injure you."

"I suspected not that you did."

"Then permit that I may pass without further let. I will never mention what I know—never tell what I have seen."

"I would comply with your request, but there is a wildness in your manner, which moves my curiosity so strongly,

that I must take liberty to question you further. Why have you quitted thus early, the hospitable roof under which I placed you?"

"The hospitable roof!"

"The hospitable roof, I say. Such it is; and such I doubted not you would consider it. There I knew you could rest securely."

"And eternally," replied Mariana with a tone in which reproach was blended with sorrow.

"What is the import of your words?" the astonished listener demanded. "You speak of eternal rest, as if it were possible that your life could have been in danger."

"It was in danger."

"For what cause; in what way?"

"I cannot explain the cause."

"This is some fatal mistake. Believe me, you have been the dupe of causeless fear. Come, return with me, and be convinced."

"Oh! no—no, I will not return. If my life is sought, kill me here. I will not return to that den of murder."

"Of murder!"

"Even so. You start with surprise. If it be real, you will be sad to learn the horrors I have known."

"For Heaven's sake, tell me to what you allude."

"I cannot think it needful. You seemed so intimate with the dreadful woman to whose care you gave me, that it is scarcely possible for her to be the wretch she is, and you ignorant of her real character."

"Your senses are bewildered. Back with me and rest, awhile, that sound reason may return. I fear not to aver, that in this realm of England, there lives not a more honourable lady."

"This is past belief."

"By all the saints above, I speak but the truth. Affliction, sore affliction, she has known, but this makes her the more indulgent to others."

"If you think what you say, I grieve to unfold what has come to my knowledge."

"You move my wonder much; but rest assured, that you are abused."

"I have appalling proofs of the contrary. She has imbrued her hands in blood."

"Impossible!"

"I have witnessed the restless throes of guilt, in the dead hour of night."

"In all you are deceived."

"It cannot be; for I have seen the remains of her victim."

"Of *her* victim!"

"Nothing less. This brought conviction to a mind not naturally prone to suspect evil."

"This is inconceivable!—yet stay—a thought breaks in upon my mind which explains all!—you speak of the remains of one murdered."

"I do."

"You have seen the head of an aged man, which rests in her cabinet."

"I have. Was it then known to you when you took me to that horrible abode?"

"You have seen what proves no guilt."

"Seek not to deceive me further."

"I seek but to undeceive. Remarked you not the lady was in mourning?"

"I did."

"She mourns for her beloved and celebrated father, Sir Thomas More. That virtuous man lately perished on a scaffold. His head was mounted on a pole by London Bridge. Some few weeks since, it so fortuned, that it was blown down, and was then conveyed to his daughter, Mrs. Roper, whom you have seen. The melancholy relic she would not exchange for the crown of him who willed her parent's death; and filial love preserves it with pious care in a cabinet purposely fashioned to receive it. On this she nightly sheds her tears, and finds no solace more sweet, than that which she derives from seeming to converse with the sad memorial of one so dear to her in life, so lamented in death. Grief will sometimes move strong emotion, and abhorrence of the cruelty by which her father fell; but if there be virtue on earth, believe me, her heart is one of the hallowed temples in which it resides."

"Your earnestness, I think, cannot be counterfeit;—yet still I doubt, for all that I have heard, that awful woman. If the tale which you have told be veritable, why was that same cabinet removed with such anxious care from the chamber in which I was to rest?"

"The kindness to which I confided you, wished to spare you the shock which you have received, and to indulge in the mournful luxury of sorrowing over all that remained to her of her immortal progenitor."

"Can I have wronged a virtuous being so grossly, as to have taken for a murderess one who is truly good, and the victim of misfortune?"

"Unintentionally you have: believe me, appearances are sometimes little to be trusted."

He uttered the last words with peculiar emphasis, his eyes rivetted on the countenance of Mariana. She shrank from his gaze, and recalling the situation in which she had been placed within the last four-and-twenty hours, half conjectured, that he was aware she had so recently been pursued as a shameless wanton, by a scoffing and reviling mob.

"Come," he added, "allow me to conduct you to the fittest asylum for youth and beauty like yours. Give me your confidence; I will prove that I have some slight claim to it, by not inquiring what affliction has brought you to the situation in which I have found you, though I might have been forgiven for doing so, seeing it was not at Greenwich that we met for the first time."

Mariana looked surprised. Hitherto fear had wholly occupied her mind, and her attention had been directed towards the actions, and not towards the features of the individual who had so providentially been sent to her assistance. But she now recalled the countenance of the master of the tent in which she had reposed at Canterbury.

"I perceive your astonishment is great," said Clifford; "but humble as I seem, and as I am,—doubt not my sincerity. A wounded heart I would not probe in wantonness, but I invite you to claim such assistance as you may need. Could gold relieve you, it shall be forthcoming."

Mariana looked with increased surprise on the speaker.

"You marvel that the poor lowly being you recognise should be enabled to proffer gold. He who was with you, I speak of Edmund, left his purse in my tent. I have not used its contents to supply my own wants, but shall not scruple to have recourse to them for yours. I risk little when I say that he would not think it possible to apply them better."

Mariana hesitated, but could not refuse credence to the representations of Clifford. His earnest entreaties prevailed on her again to seek that house from which she had so hastily retreated.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

'Tis not always
That Justice wins the prize on earth,—'tis kept
For brighter climes,—'tis made of brighter gems,
That, like yon stars, beam with unfading light.

ROCHE.

It was not without trembling that Mariana re-approached the dwelling of Mrs. Roper, and she felt no small embarrassment at meeting the female whom she had accused, as it now appeared, unjustly of murder.

To Mrs. Roper the conduct of Mariana was perfectly inexplicable; and when she again saw her with Clifford, she affected not that kindness and cordiality with which the wanderer had been greeted on the preceding night. That Mariana should have fled at an hour so unseasonably early, for the apparent purpose of meeting Clifford, was a step not easily to be reconciled with female delicacy. Clifford was not slow to perceive that his own reception was different from that to which he had been accustomed; he guessed the cause, and hesitated not to express what he thought.

"My situation, madam," said he, "is singular; and I certainly feel, that little prone as you are to draw unfavourable conclusions, you cannot but question the propriety of my conduct."

"The flight of this young stranger, and what I now see, please me not. On your representations, I received beneath this roof a female in distress. What has since occurred, leads with irresistible force to the conclusion, that if her distress were not feigned, it was brought on by misconduct."

"You judge that her meeting with me this day was in consequence of a preconcerted plan. Believe me, madam,

—you who have so kindly listened when all the rest of the world disdained to hear me—believe me now in this, the last hour I can hope to see you, that it was purely the effect of chance; or rather, I speak it with reverence, the work of Providence."

"But that flight—that guilty flight."

"Of that you, madam, you, incredulous as you may feel at this moment, were the sole cause."

"How! Did she meet with aught but kindness?"

"Through accident, she saw an object which, precious as it may be in the the eyes of a fond lamenting daughter, was well calculated to terrify a timid stranger."

The lady affected not to misunderstand that to which Clifford alluded, and he now proceeded to explain the misconception into which Mariana had fallen. His statement commanded belief, and coldness and resentment were no more.

"Poor child!" Mrs. Roper exclaimed, taking Mariana by the hand, "I wonder not at thy anxiety to fly, and grieve for the dismay of which I have been unwittingly the cause. Thy flight had made me sad, and I am much relieved to find thee neither thankless nor unworthy."

"Of the immediate cause of this fair one's distress," said Clifford, "I am wholly ignorant. To one of her own sex, I doubt not the troubled bosom will freely reveal the sources of its woe. For me, having placed her where I know she will meet with kind protection and discreet counsel, I must away."

"Do you take your departure to-day?"

"This hour even. The state of the tide already admonishes me that I have too long delayed; and now, honoured madam, we must part—for ever."

"I hope not. I shall still pray for the happiness of witnessing your joyous return, your fame vindicated—your fortunes re-established."

"Such dreams I may not cherish; but wherever I may be, on the tempestuous sea or in the arid desert, my humble supplications will not fail to ascend to the Giver of all good for your happiness. You, without wounding my pride, have enabled me to fly from scorn; and though assured by you, that you have but paid a debt in furnishing me as you have done, I shall remain eternally your debtor."

Tears of affectionate esteem trembled on his eyelids while he spoke. Turning to Mariana, he said,

"It would give me joy to offer you further aid. Gladly would I seek him who was once my friend, at whose name I saw the ready tear spring, while I spoke this morning; but my present situation is such that I cannot have that satisfaction. I dare remain no longer.—Adieu, madam!—my friend—my preserver!"

He kissed with profound respect the kindly extended hand of Mrs. Roper, and bowing to Mariana left the room.

Mrs. Roper recounted to Mariana the history of her sorrows. The recital was sad, but it emboldened the blushing guest to unfold the extraordinary circumstances which had brought them together. From the manner in which she had been treated, from the tone in which Mrs. Roper had described her own situation, Mariana expected sympathy; but her narrative produced a degree of emotion which astonished her. When she came to state the manner in which the doors of the convent had been forced, and Egbert given up to the fury of the populace in the face of day, Mrs. Roper started from her chair, with a wildness in her look and manner for which Mariana could not account, and demanded in a low tone,

"Do you speak truth?"

"Madam!"

"Forgive me, thou dear fellow-sufferer, that I ask the question; but did you see it with your own eyes?"

"I saw the wretch who would fain have destroyed me led forth by the crowd, pursued by their fierce resentment."

"God is just!" Mrs. Roper exclaimed, with an expression of earnest devotion; "but Oh! that you had mentioned this sooner! Why did you let him withdraw, this being untold?"

"Of whom do you speak?"

"Of Clifford. But I forget that you knew him not as the victim of the monster whose crimes are at length disclosed to the world."

"Speak you of him who brought me hither?"

"Even of him—your preserver. By Egbert was the fame of Clifford blasted, and his fortunes ruined. The Avenger has at length hurled his thunderbolt at the guilty; but the innocent may be lost for want of timely succour. It may

yet be possible to prevent Clifford from leaving the shores of his native country."

"What would you, madam?"

"We must pursue his steps, and bear these glad tidings to the gallant heart about to become an exile. If we should be in time—if we can but save him, how shall his wife and little one rejoice to see the mighty change in his fortunes which this must bring about!"

While yet speaking, Mrs. Roper hastily put on her bonnet and mantle.

"I must seek him instantly, or for him this happy chance may prove of no avail. You I fear are even now fatigued, yet I pray you be my companion, for my head is giddy with joy, and shall but imperfectly recount what I have heard.—Dare you make a new exertion?"

"O! madam, in such a cause I cannot be sensible of pain; I cannot know weariness. If I may be the means of conveying joy and peace to others, command me straight, and fear not that my weakness will interpose a difficulty in the way of your benevolence."

With brief delay, Mariana and her protectress left Greenwich. Mrs. Roper first directed her steps towards Podd's Elms. She did not exactly know the spot where Clifford had resided, for though her kindness would not have scorned to visit his lowly habitation, the pride of Clifford disdained to move compassion by suffering her to behold the humble shed in which he who had once been the heir of fortune was lately constrained to hide his wife and helpless offspring. Mrs. Roper had known him in prosperity, and recognising him in one of the lonely walks in which she had been accustomed to indulge after the death of her father, she commiserated his distress, believing him to be guilty. Her generous pity won his confidence, and he subsequently, at her request, recounted his story, and explained some of the peculiarities of his situation. She would fain have led him into a detailed exposition of his circumstances, with a view to judge how she might best administer relief; but when he withdrew from her prying kindness, she respected his feelings too much to press him further, and she applied herself to assist the victim of calumny in the manner which might least alarm his sensibility. A trifling sum, which had been due from Sir Thomas More to the father of Clifford, she

magnified into a considerable debt, and by this virtuous artifice enabled the object of her bounty to provide himself with all that was requisite, both for the voyage he contemplated, and his future residence in an unknown country. She exerted herself to find a vessel in which he could leave England, and succeeding in engaging the master of one which was proceeding to Cadiz, to undertake for his conveyance thither, and thence to procure him a passage to the new world. These efforts in his behalf had made it necessary that he should frequently visit Greenwich; but it was not till the eve of his departure, that he permitted her to know where Elinor and the infant were sheltered. He had even concealed from her till then, that he had become a husband and a father; for, however anxious to explain away his supposed crime, he could not bring himself to reveal circumstances which might have the appearance of being brought forward to move that sort of compassion which directly pointed at pecuniary relief. Ignorant that he had a wife, Mrs. Roper, to guard as much as possible against explanations which might defeat her kind purpose, by proving that she in reality gave, while she professed but to pay, had enjoined him to the observance of strict secrecy. Bound by the promise which she exacted, he had never mentioned her name to Elinor, though he could not conceal the fact that he had been assisted by a friend. It was in consequence of these precautions that Mrs. Roper had now some difficulty in ascertaining the exact spot.

But her pursuit was so far successful, that she found the hovel in which Clifford had resided. She derived little satisfaction from the discovery, as it was untenanted. She sighed on entering it, while she reflected on the dreadful vicissitudes of fortune experienced by him whose misery it had lately concealed; but she did not allow sensibility to check exertion. Anxious to recal, if possible, the unfortunate object of her pursuit, she rushed to the water's edge, flattering herself that he might not yet be out of sight. It was in vain that her anxious glances were thrown over the river, she saw not Clifford; but after remaining there for a few moments, she observed a boat at a great distance, moving towards her. At first, she entertained a hope that Clifford was in it, but as it neared the shore, she perceived that the rower nothing resembled him.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Roper, taking it for granted, in the eagerness of her anxiety, that the man who had just left the boat was capable of resolving the question, "where is he who lived in this cabin?"

The man replied, that the individual inquired for was then on board of a ship which was seen at some distance, and to which he pointed.

"And is the vessel now moving down the river?"

"She is under weigh; but I do not think she is moving. The wind is down, and she will not easily get through Woolwich Reach, I have a notion, this tide."

"Then out with thy boat again, and bear me to that ship. I will well requite thy labour."

The man was most willing to comply. He described himself to have just returned from putting the late inhabitant of the hovel on board, with his wife and child. "Lucky it was," he added, "that he had chanced to be near to assist; but for that circumstance, they must have lost their passage."

"Would to Heaven it had so chanced," she exclaimed.

The boat went expeditiously through the water, and gained on the ship. It had got so near that they could see those who were on deck, and Mrs. Roper thought she distinguished Clifford. In a few moments all doubt was removed, and she was certain that it was he. She enjoyed the further satisfaction of perceiving that she was recognized by Clifford. He waved his hand in answer to a similar action on her part, and pointing to Elinor and her child, who stood near him, with his left hand, his right was laid on his heart, while, with uplifted eyes, he seemed to implore a blessing from Heaven on the generous friend who had enabled him to withdraw from the land of their birth.

He was thus engaged, when the sails became suddenly distended; a breeze sprung up, and Clifford again waved his hand with exultation, to bid his benefactress a last adieu. Elinor did the same; and the child, now sustained in his father's arms, attempted to imitate the action. Mrs. Roper was near enough to mark the fond gaze of the parents bent on the smiling pledge of their love, but she had no means of intimating the nature of the errand on which she had come, and saw with grief not easily to be described, the

vessel fast receding from her, and all chance of overtaking it lost. She gazed on the forms of those whom she had endeavoured to save, till the projecting line of shore concealed them wholly from her view, before she could give the word to return. The tear of exalted benevolence trespassed on her cheek, and she exclaimed,

"Unhappy Clifford! friends and foes are destined to be alike fatal to thee. Had not thy untoward fortune brought thee to me, the calumniators of thy name had been vanquished, and thy peace restored. But I am now the abettor of their malice; and when they, by themselves, could no longer prevail, I have been made the instrument of consigning thee to inhospitable wilds, a melancholy exile."

CHAPTER XL.

———Were rebels gathering round
This dauntless slave, by Heavens! his voice alone,
And not his sword, would fight their battles.—

ROCHE.

On every side inquiries were multiplied by Lord Erpingham, in the hope of discovering the retreat of Mariana. Edmund and Ferdinand went in quest of her to all the villages in the vicinity of the metropolis, but without being able to obtain any clue to her retreat.

A week had thus been consumed, when Nicholas Bray, who had been put in requisition on this occasion, found himself at Barnet. Darkness was coming on, and he was reluctant either to go further or to return to the metropolis that night, and he therefore demanded if he could be accommodated. He was answered, that he could have no bed there.

"Why then litter down a few clean rushes, put the lattice close, and keep up a good roaring fire, and I will edify you and your family, by showing how to sleep through a night without a bed."

"I cannot pleasure you, my master," said the landlord; "for even this room will have two inmates."

"You expect two fellows to stretch their shanks here, do you?"

"Yes, my master."

"But you see it is dark; they will not come now."

"They are already here."

"And why, then, have they not shewn themselves."

"Expecting you to go, they cared not to enter while you rested here."

"They may come in. Tell them I am not proud; and so they do not take all the rushes, I have no objection to their sleeping here; provided they take good care not to snore louder than may become persons of gentle condition."

"But I tell you, they care not for strange company."

"Well, if they care not for it, I suppose they heed nothing about it."

"But they would rather have thy room."

"They shall be right welcome to my room to-morrow, so they will but let me have your room to-night. Bestir thyself, my host, and bring salt and radishes straight to flavour thy nappy; and for those who sojourn here, bid them be merry, and tell them their worships shall be free to drink, in my name, a flaggon of thy best ale this night, if their worships can pay the charge of the same, or you, being no prudent man, are willing to trust them with it till morning."

"They will not be so sported with, and you are likely to rue offending, for one of them is of quality."

"Is he, by the Virgin? Oh then we shall do together, for I am of the quality myself; so tell them the fool of the lord cardinal, Nicholas Bray, gentleman, kisses their hands, and begs them not to be strange."

"I shall do your bidding," said the host; "but if they give you entertainment of the sort you covet not, never carp at me for the same."

"Away, knave; thy vulgarity shocks me. Not to know that a fool is good company, proves thee a clod well enough in thy place perchance, like the bung in thine ale cask, but valueless for conversation or counsel."

The host retired somewhat disconcerted by the pertinacity of Bray, and two ragged, ruffianly men made their appearance. Bray had expected guests of a superior order. He was surprised, but not embarrassed at their aspect, and accosted them with his usual flippancy.

"Gentles, you are right welcome. Mine host said one of you was of the quality, and I doubt not you are both nobles of a marvellously ancient and singularly numerous order."

"Spare your jibes," cried one of the strangers, "I am not of the uncommon sort, but the wearer of a title."

"I am glad you have something to wear besides that tattered doublet, which, to say the truth, is well fashioned to give thy titled carcase the benefit of bleaching, beyond what the common sort would desire. But may I ask what is this same title? Am I speaking to the new *Lord Clerkenweli*, for the late one, I heard, died suddenly at Tyburn?—(I judge the air of that neighbourhood bad, from the number of deaths which there occur;)—or are you of the illustrious family of the *Shoreditches?*"

"I am none of these whipsters who can shoot at a mark on a holiday, but not at a man on the field of battle. I am an earl."

"Earl of what?"

"Of Poverty."

"I should have thought you might have been king of that realm, for the unlimited command you appear to have of its ragged treasures."

"Hold that tongue of thine, or these saucy scoffings, seeing you have not now your cock's comb on your head, which every true fool wears, may chance to get you that nose hammered flatter than it is."

"Thy aid is not wanted to bring perfection to my countenance; and for the feature you have mentioned, it already lies quietly down like a dame's lap-dog before the fire, wherefore my lord cardinal used to say, 'Nicholas, that head of thine is *Socratic;*' 'yea,' would I thereupon reply, 'and being Socratic, I can fit the rim of my cup close to my face, and philosopher-like, swallow my sack without flinching, whilst your reverence, by reason of your nasal protuberance, must give way when you drink, and turn up your nose at the liquor you love.'"

"Be not put in fume with the varlet," cried the earl's companion, "but borrow his jacket, and turn him forth."

"Rather let us keep him, for much I suspect he is a spy. Whom seek you, sirrah?"

"So please your gentleness, I seek a young wanderer of

the she sex, some time since a nun. It is only a woman that has led my unsuspecting innocence astray."

"And what want you with her, I would know?"

"Even to conduct her to her friends, and—the tale is too long for telling—to give her one who has strangely discovered that he is her father."

"And who is he?"

"Oh he cannot boast of being an earl, like you; but he is something, notwithstanding, and he is called Lord Erpingham."

The Earl of Poverty and his companion looked at each other with surprise.

"Lord Erpingham, said you?" demanded the earl. "And is it his daughter that, in the dress of a nun, passed this way?"

"I know not that, but if it be so, I am much rejoiced. If you have seen, direct me to her, and all that this house can afford shall be yours, to eat, to drink, and to wear; and, moreover, angels shall chink in your pence-deserted pockets."

"Nay, if she be daughter to Lord Erpingham, we will have good ransom."

"Ransom!—Good pay you shall have; but where is she?"

"She is towards Yorkshire, where a band of right gallant hearts now take the field. They desired to have Lord Erpingham for their leader, but when I attended him to make known their wishes, notwithstanding all men supposed him most staunch to the true church, I could hardly get speech with him. This having reported, I was sent back on a new mission, when he refused me entrance at his porch, and nothing would hear of what I had to tell."

"Truly that was hard, but perchance he did not know your quality."

"He did know it."

"Then hie to him now; take his daughter with you, and I will answer for it, you shall find no difficulty in gaining an audience."

"That may not be; for I have heard a rumour gone forth that the rising has already taken place, and if so I am too noted to escape, should I be seen in London."

"Nay, if you go now in the darkness, you may return by the morning."

"But he will not admit me."

"Then Timothy Shelton, the son of the old laureat, will."

"And where is he?"

"He keeps the Bell at the lane end, by which you go from Fickett's Fields to Drury house, the way passengers take to escape the pits and stagnant water in the Strand."

"What!" cried the earl's companion, "is the son of the poet an innkeeper?"

"I have told truth. Old Tom impudently scoffed about my Lord Cardinal by reason, as he said that, being the son of a butcher, his genealogy was greasy; on the which I replied, that a fat sorrow (such as my lord's was then) a man might bear with fortitude. This Master Tim understands now."

"Is he poor?"

"If he is not, he soon will be, for the doddy-pate has agreed to pay in rent by the year no less than seventeen shillings and eight pence, taking it on lease,) though the house has but eight rooms besides the kitchen, a skittle-ground and an orchard, with a meadow for bull-baiting."

"But what good shall follow from our journeying to the Bell to-night, if Lord Erpingham will not hold communication with me?"

"Because, even though he were in his bed, I dare call him up, and can pass between you with messages, which, respecting this damsel, I know he will be right glad to receive and to reward."

"If he will now attend to our suit, and aid our cause with his presence and advice, he shall soon regain his daughter."

"But how shall I know that this is the very female I seek?"

"Marry! I hold it to be clear enough, as you look for a nun. She would not tell her name, wherefore, thinking that might chance, which now comes to pass, that she would be sought for by some man of importance, we detained her."

"From what convent does she come?"

"She said from St. Helen's, which the King, still adding to his tyrannies, has now suppressed."

"O then there can be no more doubt, if she comes from St. Helen's. So please your earlship, let us to horse. I thought not of further journeying to-day, but now

hence with me to Fickett's Fields, and I will negociate for you."

"Do you mean us fairly?"

"Truly do I, my good Lord Poverty. If you have still a doubt, propose any oath your penniless wisdom can fashion, and I will take it."

"Attempt to deceive, and, mark me, I speak at once to the point—look to have a dagger in thy throat."

"Your lordship speaks to the point with a vengeance."

"If you deal foully with us, hope not for life."

"If I were roguishly inclined, after what you have said, compassion for mankind in general, would make me true to you; for what could the poor world do if I were gone?"

"Tush! remember, to be false to us is to be a traitor to religion and liberty, for which, if you be a true man, you are prepared to fight and die."

"Why, as to dying for liberty, though it be a very fine thing to talk about, I must confess it is not much to my taste; for I have an awkward suspicion that when I am dead, the finest liberty in the world would not be worth a penny to me, and, as aforesaid, I know not how the world could wag without me."

"Why there were fools before you were born."

"Yes, and the race will not be wholly extinct after I am dead, if any of the present company chance to survive me. Still I would not willingly leave mankind in worse hands, and therefore, content in all cases to keep my life out of jeopardy, your worship shall have nothing to dread from my treachery."

"Then we will to London straight, and with speed."

"In this your worship's wisdom is most apparent, for being at the Bell, I dare promise you an omelet for your supper."

"I fear you promise too largely, for Tim's cookery shall be over, and he in bed ere we get there, as we cannot arrive till nine of the clock."

"That matters not, for I have been a great man at the Bell ever since the sign which stands before the door was first set up by old Billy Sutton, who now, by reason the rent of the Bell was too chargeable, has gone to the Axe at Aldgate-without; and for Tim, I have known his father's verses."

"That may be," said the earl, "and yet he may not choose to bestir himself for thee, at so late an hour."

"Told I not, that in a case like this I shall not scruple to call Lord Erpingham from his pillow, and after that, need I say I fear not to disturb a tapster. He who would pay seventeen and eightpence by the year for his rent alone, must tend his customers late and early; so think not that I, being as I am, run risk of meeting rebuff from that poor lanky, dangling devil of a boy, Tim Skelton."

Attracted by the hope of making a better report to their brother-insurgents than they had as yet been enabled to prepare, respecting the intentions of Lord Erpingham, the Earl of Poverty and his companion mounted two shabbily caparisoned mules, and, with Nick Bray, took the road to London.

Arriving at Fickett's Fields, the jester found no difficulty in making good all he had promised with respect to Tim Skelton. But though anxious to accommodate his guests, Tim was somewhat reserved and thoughtful in his manner. Bray, who was in high spirits, from contemplating the important service he believed he was about to perform and its probable reward, remarked on this;—

"Why, Tim, thou art trying to throw thought into that unfried pancake face of thine. Give over thy labour. Never think of breeding an ox in a rabbit-hutch, or of growing an oak where the moss springs on thy thatch. Now reflection, in spite of its nobleness, may be likened to an oak, and, therefore it cannot flourish on the dull ugly mask which thy poor empty skull is doomed to wear."

"I thought not to see you in merry mood, at this time," said Tim.

"What! dost think I came to condole with thee on the scantiness of thy purse, which begins to grow on thy scantiness of brain? Not so, man—I will not twit thee for thy blunder. True it is, that thou hast made a marvellously foolish pact in taking the Bell as thou hast, when I dare avouch thou mightest have rented *The Shunamites*, where bishops should be thy worst guests, for a like rent, and when thou mightest have had the *Axe at Aldgate* for fourteen and nine-pence by the year."

"I think not of the rent that—"

"Think not of the rent! then thou art mad; so hang thyself to-night, and I will take care that no coroner shall burn thee for the same. Why, man, two centuries past, all

Holborn paid not thy rent five times over. Was not the charge of a tenement for my Lord Bishop of Ely but twenty-two shillings and fourpence? yet thou, one of the common sort, must give seventeen shillings and eightpence for this grim-looking Bell. After this, the bookseller who offered two pounds thirteen shillings and four-pence for a house in Paternoster-Row, which is in the city, ought not to be accounted lunatic."

"Your speech gives me much pleasure, since it tells me what indeed I hoped from the first, and I will say it was convinced must be the fact, that all is right, and that this matter, as to my Lord Erpingham, will not end tragically, by bringing his head to the block."

"Block! head!" exclaimed Bray: "what talk you about? To bring a block to that head of thine would be like carrying water to the Thames. What dost stare at?

"Because you seem as if you had forgotten that Lord Erpingham is arrested for high treason, and has been carried to the Tower this afternoon."

"To the Tower! Lord Erpingham carried to the Tower, say you?"

"It is most true. Had you been four hours sooner you would have met the halberdiers."

The glee of Bray was suddenly changed into sorrow. From what he considered his good fortune, he had been much disposed to be merry, but now he was affected in a very different manner, while, leaving the Bell, he repaired to the house of Lord Erpingham, where, as Timothy Skelton informed him, Master Edmund was still supposed to remain.

CHAPTER XLI.

Cham. No, I'll none of it: I pr'ythee keep that for the hangman; for I know thou worship'st Saint Nicholas as truly as a man of falsehood may.
Gads. What talk'st thou to me of the hangman?

SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH British liberty has been the poet's darling song through many ages, and though patriots of the present day talk with rapture of that state of freedom supposed to have been enjoyed in the "good old times," before those innovations on the constitution had taken place, which furnish favourite topics to modern declaimers, but few of the blessings of a liberal constitution were tasted by Englishmen at the period identified with this narrative; and he who looked for security from innocence found in many melancholy and memorable instances, that he was under a fatal delusion.

The crime with which Lord Erpingham was charged, was that of denying the supremacy of the King. Of this he had been suspected before the banquet at Ely House, which he had been solicited to attend. His exemplary conduct had failed to disarm malice. It was thought right by those about the King, to send an agent, who, describing himself to come from the sovereign, to ask, in confidence, for counsel, might learn the peer's real sentiments. His dutiful avowal of the opinions he entertained was considered to afford excellent evidence on which to convict of high treason.

But it will be remembered that the Earl of Poverty had intruded upon Lord Erpingham on that same night. His shabby appearance and suspicious manner had attracted the notice of the person sent from the Court to entrap his lordship. The malcontent had since been recognized as the fisherman who assumed the title of Earl of Poverty, and his presence in Fickett's Fields was supposed to prove a connection between Lord Erpingham and the Yorkshire rebels, who, after several risings of small importance, had at length concentrated their strength, for the purpose of marching on London, to demand the redress of certain grievances, and were already set out on what they called "*The Holy Pilgrimage.*"

Such were the circumstances under which Lord Erping-

ham had been made a state-prisoner, and Edmund, in the midst of his affliction on account of Mariana, had now to fear that his most valued friend would shortly be doomed to perish on a scaffold.

He was alone; for Ferdinand, as a last hope, had taken the resolution of making inquiries, at the port where he had landed, if Mariana had attempted returning to Spain. He had left London on the preceding day. Uncertain how to act, Edmund was distracted with thoughts opposed to each other, but alike in one respect, inasmuch as they were all painful. It was misery to remain inactive while ignorant of the fate of Mariana, yet exertion had hitherto proved useless: and it was painful to pass to any considerable distance, while Lord Erpingham was in his present situation, though he could not expect remaining near his prison would serve him.

While occupied with these mournful reflections, he saw the jester enter. He remembered the important service which Bray had rendered him, but the recollection was torture, as with it came the thought that his liberation had proved the source of new suffering.

"Your services," said he, "are gratefully but not joyfully remembered. Without your aid, I should have perished where William de Broke breathed his last, instead of surviving to experience the woe which has now come over me."

"Verily, Master Edmund, I begin to think myself a kind of bad omen, or a sort of Jonah who evermore gets the ship he sails in, somehow or other, into a storm. My Lord Cardinal had Tommy Cavendish long enough without taking harm, but soon after I became his fool, his reverence met with his downfall. The stews in Southwark have flourished for ages, but now, since I was jester there, they have been put down by sound of trumpet; and lastly, my Lord Erpingham, so long beloved and admired by all manner of men, since I came to do him service, is clapped in the Tower."

"It is sad," Edmund remarked, "but no reproach to you."

"True, it is no reproach to me, but it is ruin to me. I am considered a fool of foul weather. Master Richard Slash, the chirurgeon, cut off a man's leg the other day, who straight catches the plague and dies. Wherefore Master Richard

died himself, because his patient did, from sheer fear that people would say he knew not how to keep a man alive. I shall die from fear also; for if none that I serve can live, how can I continue to hope for a livelihood ?"

"But tell me, have your new inquiries been as unfortunate as your former ones?"

"I have no courage to answer. Yet I came to Fickett's field's brimful of joy, because I had at last succeeded in learning good tidings of the Lady Mariana."

"What—what of her ?" demanded Edmund eagerly.

Bray proceeded to describe the company into which he had fallen, and the message with which he had been charged. Edmund was seriously disturbed, to find that the Earl of Poverty had been brought into the neighbourhood of Lord Erpingham at this critical moment. The proposition of the rebels he would have spurned with disdain, as he knew Lord Erpingham would; but he feared to exasperate men who had Mariana in their power. He considered it advisable to get the pretended Earl and his companion to retreat, before they could be recognized. He therefore instructed Bray to desire them to take their departure immediately, at the same time promising that he (Lord Erpingham being away) would follow and largely requite their services, if they would bring him to the lady whom they had represented to be in their custody.

But when Bray returned to the Bell with this message, he found that his late companions had already taken to flight. The arrest of Lord Erpingham, though it did not prove him hostile to their cause, clearly established that it was in vain to look for his assistance. This point settled, they had no anxiety on any subject in which he might feel personally interested; and therefore they judged it prudent to decamp, since they were not quite certain that to be seen with one looked upon as a part of his lordship's household, was perfectly compatible with their safety. At all events, danger might grow out of delay, and they had no longer any object for staying. More was not necessary to induce them to quit Fickett's Fields, with all convenient expedition.

Edmund felt much embarrassed by the situation in which he found himself; but anxiety to release Mariana from the rude hands which he had been given to understand detained her, prevailed over every other consideration; and he re-

solved on following the Earl of Poverty, to claim the fugitive as the daughter of Lord Erpingham, on horse after horse, the fleetest that could be procured. But with all the speed he could exert, he failed to overtake the parties with whom he wished to negociate. He could not endure the thought of returning without obtaining certain information of Mariana, and still pursued the route which he supposed them to have taken, accompanied by Bray; who boldly maintained, as they advanced, that the Earl of Poverty could not be far before them, and he, at least, most confidently appealed to Edmund if he had not been right all along, when on arriving at Doncaster, he recognised the features and tatters of that very important personage.

The insurrection, which had brought that man into notice, and given him the ridiculous title which he owned, had originated with a monk named David Mackarell, who, to ingratiate himself with the vulgar multitude, of whose services he proposed to avail himself, had assumed the appellation of *Captain Cobbler*. He had been at the head of one of the monasteries which Henry had dissolved. Their suppression injured many of the poor who depended on them for support, and Mackarell not only convinced the sufferers, that that measure was unjust towards them, but he had the address to make many believe it could not fail to prove a source of permanent calamity to the nation at large. Hence the tumultuous rising, and the threatening advance towards London, which was called a *Pilgrimage of Grace*. That the religious houses should be promptly re-established was one of their first demands. But they most vehemently complained of the fearful infringement of the British constitution, which had taken away the right of sanctuary, by means of which, in what were then called "the good old times of our ancestors," murderers and other criminals might claim a refuge in certain places, and for a season set the officers of justice at defiance. There was still one other point which they were most earnestly fixed to carry, which many, who did not join the insurgents, and indeed the majority of the nation, were much inclined to favour: this was to prevail on the King to declare legitimate that extremely popular princess, for such she was at the time of this insurrection, his eldest daughter, since distinguished by the odious title of "bloody Queen Mary."

Edmund gazed with astonishment on the vast multitudes collected together for the purpose of advancing to the capital. He found them provided with tents, and irregularly armed. Large banners, on which a crucifix appeared, were prepared to be carried before them. On these ensigns—in his pictured hands, feet, and side, the five wounds of the Redeemer, with the word Jesus, were made particularly conspicuous; and it was the constant occupation of the ecclesiastics, who mingled with the crowd in great numbers, to represent that they ought to be kept constantly in view, with the feeling that it would be sacrilegious ingratitude to him who had suffered for them, not to advance in the cause of the rights of his church. Still more to impress this on their minds, a small copy of the banner was worn on the sleeve of each pilgrim; and this distinction was the only feature of uniformity to be remarked in the rabble host, which comprehended all the varieties of attire, as it did almost all the varieties of calling and condition, which were at that time known in England.

The arrival of two strangers well mounted, was an incident of some moment at this period. It was necessary to ascertain that the parties were not spies; but, in any case, the insurgents calculated on strengthening their cavalry with the horses, if not with the men. With all necessary gravity, the Earl of Poverty approached the new comers, and the voice of one of them, reproving him for running away after supper without saying "Good even," at once enabled him to distinguish his late companion, Nicholas Bray.

"Truly, Mr. Fisherman, I cry you mercy, my Lord Poverty I mean; it seemeth to me you might as well have tarried where you supped on Friday night, till I might return with such tidings as I had to bring. For though, thanks to my bounty, your bowels were not scantily provided for on that occasion, I might have put wealth into your purse, which would have served for another repast or so."

"It may be that you tell me no lie. I say not that it is so; but when I found that the great lord I wished to be near had been arrested, I judged it right to waste no time on forms, lest I should get sent another way. Thou understandest."

"I believe I do. You say you were afraid of being sent

another road, from which I judge that you, though but the fresh cast spawn of the sea, have made out that Tyburn lies away from the Tower."

"Where so much depended on one, that one was bound to look to his own safety."

"You considered it your duty to fly from the gallows. By the mass, you have a quick sense of right and wrong, and for your taste, which leads you to quit your meat to escape a halter, I hold it to be excellent. But now you must see, since we have followed you thus far, that no treachery was intended."

"Nevertheless, there might be much danger. A title like mine brings much peril."

"That is most true. He must be a bold man or a fool, who willingly bears the name of poverty. The proverb tells that 'poverty is no sin,' but that must be no truth, since all mankind are leagued against it, in order to punish those who are guilty of being poor. The very names heretofore given to those who toiled in want, begin to signify crime, and now we can scarcely talk of a *rascal*, a *knave*, or a *villein*, without being supposed to speak of a rogue."

"Have done with trifling," said Edmund, "and let us speak of that which has brought us into these parts. I am advised," he continued, addressing himself to the Earl of Poverty, "that you have detained a lady respecting whom inquiry has been made."

"We have detained her, but of this you may be sure, that from persons of our note and appearance," and here the Earl of Poverty adjusted his tatters with an air of dignity intended to inspire the most profound respect;—"here she will have to deal with gentles, and when we terminate our *pilgrimage of grace* in London, we shall restore the convent from which she has been dislodged, and give her back to her late abode."

"Give her back!" echoed Edmund, "Can you contemplate an act so foul? Can you return one so lovely and so young to the detected abominations of the convent, to which, in evil hour, she was consigned?"

"How now!" cried the Earl. "What manner of man art thou? Of what dost thou talk?"

"You must surely have heard of the frightful enormities proved to have taken place within the walls of the convent,

from which she, respecting whom we have conversed, has been liberated."

"Nay, since thus you speak, you cannot be the friend I took you for. You are, perhaps, one of the false swearing, visitors hired by the King's council to set afloat such tales as may furnish excuses for seizing the goods of convents."

"I have spoken but truth, and the maid you have seen can bear witness to what I have said."

"She," returned the Earl of Poverty, "complains not, and by good hap she comes this way, even now, to answer for herself."

With what eagerness did Edmund turn to gaze once more on the fondly beloved being he expected to see!—His disappointment was great, when he found that the nun whom he had so anxiously pursued was not Mariana. He faintly demanded,

"Is this—is this the nun of whom you told me?"

"It is. Now ask her if she had cause to complain?"

"Of her I know nothing. This is not the fugitive I sought."

"But she is a nun, and can resolve you in aught that concerns the suppression of her convent."

"From her I seek no information. Since it is thus, since the Lady Mariana is not here, I shall not prolong my stay."

"But," replied the Earl of Poverty, "not for the price of a new doublet, dare I suffer you to depart."

"Do you make me a prisoner?"

"I shall take you to our captain. He will perhaps make you one, but I should betray my high trust if I failed to conduct you to him, together with your companion, master fool."

"The foul fiend seize your earldom," cried Bray; "your lordship seems to have got to your old trade again. Seizing on us in this marvellously ungallant manner, it is quite clear that with you *all's fish that comes to the net*."

"I," said the Earl, "must obey my captain."

"Captain Cobler you mean, that is Father David—David Mackarell. Truly your captain seems well named for you. No doubt your lordship, being a fishing man, will stick close to a *Mackarel*."

"You would do no unwise thing, to spare this sauce."

"You shall have no more *fish sauce*."

"You will perhaps have a halter about your neck."

"If that is the case, by the mass, I have made a *pretty kettle of fish*."

"Hold your peace, and follow me."

"Yes, your earlship, but I flatter myself, you will not take it amiss, if I say, since you talk about hanging a poor flat fish like me, that I hope you will have *other fish to fry*."

CHAPTER XLII.

> You have a holy father,
> A graceful gentlemen; against whose person,
> So sacred as it is, I have done sin.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

FERDINAND visited Dover, and made inquiries of every one from whom he could hope to obtain the least information, of those who had passed through. The answers which he received were anything but such as he was anxious to hear. He proceeded to other parts of the coast, but met with no better success; and, at length, overwhelmed with disappointment and regret, he again took the road to the metropolis. He frequently deviated from the direct track, in the wild hope of meeting with the object of his anxious pursuit, and thus wasted several days in his progress.

He was within a few miles of London when the mortification he had sustained, combined with the fatigue he had undergone, so affected his health, that he was unable to complete his journey. A raging fever seized on him, he became delirious, and death for a time appeared inevitable.

When the crisis was past, and he had become convalescent, he was impatient to return to London, to terminate the alarm which he feared his absence would cause Lord Erpingham to experience. He was apprehensive that his lordship would be mocked with the hope that he had succeeded in discovering the retreat of Mariana. As soon as he could mount his horse, he resolved to proceed to the metropolis. He accordingly left the inn at Blackheath, where he had rested, but soon found that the exercise of riding was more than

he could bear. He reluctantly made up his mind to return, but his exhaustion was so great, that before he could accomplish this he fell from his horse in a state of insensibility.

On reviving he found himself in a private house. He had sustained little injury from his fall, and was desirous of returning thanks for the kind attention he had received, and of retiring. This, however, was not permitted, and he was almost compelled to remain till the next day, when he prepared to depart, with many expressions of gratitude.

"We separate not so abruptly," said the person whose hospitality had been so seasonably interposed in his behalf. "You seem surprised at the peremptory tone in which I speak, but a greater surprise awaits you."

"Speak on. After the violent shocks which I have lately sustained, it is no common disclosure that can move me."

"Nor is it one of common interest that I have to make. You had a niece whom you fondly loved?"

"I thought so."

"Nay, of that you must be certain."

"Not so, madam. But, make no pause, ask no questions, but answer in one word—Speak you of Mariana?"

"Yes."

"What of her? Where is she? Is she alive?"

"She lives, and is in safety."

"Where? Tell me, that I may fly to her."

"That shall not be necessary. Yet a moment, and she will fly to you."

"Is she beneath this roof?"

"She is."

"Can it be possible! Oh joy unutterable! And yet one thought comes over me."

"Let none be entertained which can disturb your peace. Saved by a happy accident from the basest outrage, chance conducted her to this place, to the town of Greenwich; and one most injured, most unfortunate himself, was the means of introducing her to me."

"Amazement! And I,—how came I here?"

"That you shall know immediately."

"But where is Mariana?"

"This moment restores her to your love."

While speaking, she opened a door, and Mariana presented herself. She bounded forward with uncontrollable

transport, and sunk in the arms of Ferdinand, exclaiming,—

"Am I, am I so blest as to know once more the embrace of an uncle?"

Ferdinand heard not her words, and could only utter from the fulness of his heart—

"My dearest sister!"

The word sister commanded the attention of Mariana, and when it was repeated, she could not refrain from saying—

"I fear that the joy of this moment has almost overpowered your mind. You have called me sister!"

"And such you are. Oh! I have much to tell. But not to enter into the details now, when, to say the truth, I am ill prepared for lengthened narrative, let it suffice to say, that a wonderful discovery has taken place since we parted, which has established that I am that for which I was often taken,—your brother: and that mine will be the delightful task of speedily restoring you to a father's arms."

"Indeed!—Is this possible? Forgive me when I ask it, but I fear your reason wanders."

"No, Mariana, reason is now called home to my brain, and unlooked-for peace to my heart. You have a father, who has long mourned for his absent offspring; and that father is no other than the peer whose praises you have often heard from Edmund—is no other than Lord Erpingham."

The grateful astonishment of brother and sister at thus unexpectedly meeting, and under circumstances so extraordinary, it would be worse than useless to dilate upon, but the accident which brought them together, ought not to be passed over.

As Mariana was by no means certain that Ferdinand remained in England, she knew not where to seek him, nor could Mrs. Roper suggest any course which seemed likely to give her the desired information. She therefore entreated Mariana to consider herself at home, in her house, till some fortunate chance should enable her to rejoin her only relation. It was not till she had been resident at Greenwich some time, that it occurred to her that Lord Erpingham might possibly know what had been the intentions of Ferdinand. His lordship, the friend of her father, had been in

the habit of visiting Mrs. Roper, and she was somewhat surprised that of late he had omitted to do so. The perfect seclusion in which she lived had precluded her from hearing of his arrest, and she determined to wait on him at Fickett's fields. For this purpose she was leaving Greenwich, accompanied by Mariana, when their way was impeded by a crowd of persons assembled round a horseman, who had fallen. Mariana saw the face of Ferdinand as it was lifted from the ground, and instantly recognised her supposed uncle. Mrs. Roper directed that he should be conveyed to her house, and thus brought about the present meeting.

Indescribable joy took possession of the heart of Mariana, when she heard from the lips of Ferdinand those events which had recently occurred, and especially when she learned that the cause of that restlessness and gloom, which she had never ceased to lament, was removed. The expressions which Ferdinand had sometimes used, the language of the letter which she had received from him in the convent, were now explained; and equal exultation and gratitude grew on the reflection that she was no longer doomed to sigh that she might gaze on him no more, nor tremble for the unknown evil, mysteriously hanging over him.

Though Mariana had taken the vows of a nun, from these she was now liberated by the royal edict, which put down the establishment to which she belonged. Exclusive of this circumstance, the King, in the character of supreme head of the church, had taken care that too much importance should not be attached to such vows. As one step towards the complete suppression of monastic vows, he had determined on throwing open the doors to all their inmates, who were not more than four-and-twenty years of age. This measure, while it relieved persons thus circumstanced from all apprehension for the present, induced many to return to the world with little concern about the future. Consciences, in other respects very tender, reconciled themselves, with little difficulty, to the sanction thus given to following their own inclinations.

The exultation of Ferdinand at having regained his sister, no language can depict. Blessed, while he witnessed the joy which now animated her countenance, and still more so, in anticipating that which was yet to come, when he should restore her to a fondly expectant father's arms.

Impatient for this consummation, it was determined, that on the succeeding day, he should perform the grateful task of conducting Mariana to Lord Erpingham. Mrs. Roper, anxious to witness a scene so rich in felicity, proposed to accompany them, and shortly after noon on the morrow, they set forth from Greenwich.

As they approached the bridge, Mrs. Roper looked with a sigh at the pole on which the head of her father had been elevated. It was now surmounted by that of a more recent victim. She turned from the ghastly object, with the exclamation—"God only knows whose head may next take thy place!"

She counselled Ferdinand to go forward and prepare Lord Erpingham for the coming of Mariana. Ferdinand felt the importance of this hint, and acted upon it immediately. When he entered Fleet-street, he was considerably in advance, but here he was stopped by the pressure of an immense multitude, and the active exertions of officers, who were endeavouring to keep the road clear for a procession, which was forthwith expected to pass.

In consequence of his being thus impeded, he was soon rejoined by Mariana and her conductress. They came up just as the looked-for procession was seen. Mrs. Roper turned pale. Ferdinand remarked it, and inquired the cause of her being thus affected.

"Alas!" said she, "it reminds me of the mournful cavalcade it was mine to behold, on the day when my dear and virtuous father received his doom. All I now see, recals the eager interest with which the crowd pressed to see the manner in which the axe was carried."

"This, madam, I understand not."

"You shall know, that he who is accused of crimes against the state, and is of some rank in the same, is carried in procession from the Tower to Westminster-hall, for trial. The axe by which, if adjudged guilty, he shall die, is borne before him by an officer, but with the edge from him, to denote that though accused, till trial shall be had, he is accounted innocent."

"Is such the custom of England?"

"It is. When placed at the bar where he must plead to his indictment, and defend himself as he may, the axe is still

kept near him in the manner I have said, but when the verdict shall be given, if the prisoner he pronounced guilty, thereupon, immediately, even in the court, the edge of the fatal weapon is turned towards the neck, which it is speedily to sever, and so is it carried through the streets, on returning to the Tower."

The procession drew near, and Mrs Roper perceived that it was indeed one of those spectacles of which she had been speaking.

"I fear," said she, "it will be ours to view such a melancholy sight as I have named. There are the yeomen, with their bills and partisans. Behind, I see more of them, their partisans borne on the shoulder, and with them are the musketeers, armed with the new fangled harquebuzes, which are carried without rests. But now I can distinguish those who approach. He who rides alone, after the first company, is Sir W. Kingston, the constable of the Tower. And see, behind him comes the chamberlain of the Tower; —he bears the fatal axe—Oh God! the edge is towards the prisoner."

And her sympathy for the devoted offender, and afflicting recollections, almost overcame her. Her attention was in that moment arrested by the sudden exclamations of Ferdinand—

"Saviour of man! What sight is this? It cannot be;—yet it—it is my father!—it is Lord Erpingham."

Mrs. Roper looked with apprehension and dismay at the prisoner, who was now passing them, and saw that it was indeed the friend of her father, — and the same Lord Erpingham, whom even in that moment she had hoped to see embracing his children.

Lord Erpingham appeared perfectly tranquil and collected. His eyes were frequently raised towards Heaven, with an expression of countenance that told he was engaged in preparing for that awful change to which he was sentenced by the decision just pronounced. He had nearly passed, when the confusion occasioned in the crowd by the emotion of Ferdinand, attracted his attention. It was then that he perceived his son, and by his side the weeping Mariana. The heart of the father was moved; he doubted not that he beheld his child, — his anxiously sought daughter; and thinking only of her, he turned towards the place where she

stood. It was supposed by the guards he meditated escape, and a sudden forward movement of those who followed, prevented him from approaching Mariana. Vainly did he attempt to explain. The pressure of those who had come forward, and those who being in advance had retraced their steps to support their comrades, compelled the populace to move in all directions; and Ferdinand, his sister, and their friend, carried away by the all-potent current, saw no more of Lord Erpingham, who, preceded by the axe, with the edge towards his person, was carried, with a quicker pace than had been previously thought fitting an occasion of such solemnity, towards the Tower.

CHAPTER XLIII.

For stranger seas we're bound,
Which wash the savage shore,
Where wild winds sweep, in chorus deep,
To swell the billows' frantic roar.

HIGH-WAYS AND BYEWAYS.

"THE die is cast!" said Clifford, as the vessel in which he had embarked bounded before the favouring gale. "Already the land of our birth is but dimly seen in the distance. Yet a few moments, and we shall have looked on it for the last time. Does no misgiving come over you? Feels not my Elinor, that she has made too large a sacrifice, in giving up an affectionate parent, gay friends, and splendid fortune, for him who is now her lord?"

"Nay, Clifford, doubt me not. As we advance, a wild, indefinite, unbounded hope, vast as the interminable ocean in which we are launched, comes to me more sweet than the most joyous certainty which was ever mine."

"This is well; thy gallant courage gives me new energy. We shall yet see happy days, and little regret the shores to which we now bid adieu for ever."

"In good truth, Master Howard," (that was the name which

Clifford had assumed,) said the master, "there is small reason to sorrow for quitting old England in times like these."

"At least," said Clifford, "I have no reason to regret aught that I have left behind in it."

"And you but feel as many more do. Merry England shall never again be what England was."

"Virtue and honesty are known no more, and sacrilegious profanation pervades the whole land."

"Much do I fear you err but little in coming to this conclusion."

"There was no slight proof of what I named, in what occurred the day before we sailed. Heard you what chanced in London then?"

"I was resident in Kent," was the reply of Clifford, "and had no such recent tidings of what had taken place in the metropolis."

"Marry, sir, you will marvel at the tale; on that day the far-famed and most virtuous Father Egbert—"

"Father Egbert!"

"One of the priests of the Trinity—"

"What! what of him?—nay, why this pause?"

"I cannot choose but pause from surprise to see you moved already. If you are thus stricken at hearing but his name, what shall you be when you know that this most holy character was taken with his concubine, a nun of Saint Helen, even in the chapel of the convent."

Clifford gazed on the man with unspeakable surprise.

"Why, it seems to take your breath away, goodman Howard," said the master.

"It has, indeed," he at length answered; "but if thy tale be veritably true, it shall give me new life."

"Nay, for the truth myself can answer."

"How may that be? Thou couldst not be in the convent to see. This, I judge, is but a rumour."

"Proof was not wanting; and these eyes saw both the monk and his mistress hunted through the streets of London, on signal being given by the visitors, who came from detecting the sanctified Egbert."

"God of the just! I bow before thy awful throne, and recognize thy mercy. Look up, my Elinor; if resigned before, be joyful now, for the crimes of my undoer can no

longer be concealed, and the world shall yet do justice to my name."

"Said I not so," demanded Elinor, "when you desponded? Confiding in the justice of the Eternal, I looked for this."

"Yes, dearest, thou art a mine of living wealth. Now bounds my heart with rapture springing from my very wrongs, for these have been the test of faithful love, and proved thee the noblest prodigy ever fashioned by Heaven's creating hand."

"Speak you thus to me, Clifford, altered, faded as I am?"

"If suffering has drunk the lustre of thine eyes, it is on me their brightness has been squandered; and in spite of the glorious fortitude which lifts thee above all woman-kind, tears for my wayward wanderings have given thy cheek a paleness which it was not wont to wear, shall I not recal thy vanished beauty, and own the splendour of the sacrifice which pity made at the altar of affection?"

"Say, rather, of reason."

"No, Elinor; thy soul was too generously warm to admit reason to its councils. But our woe approaches its termination; joy shall restore the radiance of thine eyes, and brighter roses will flourish on thy cheek."

Night came on, but Clifford was in no haste to seek repose. The degradation of Egbert he regarded as the re-establishment of his own character; he no longer thought of reparing to the new world, but determined to go from Spain to England by the first ship.

With the exultation which glowed in his heart, a feeling of regret was mingled that he had not sooner heard of Egbert's miscarriage.

He questioned the master minutely on the subject, and the circumstantial statement which he gave left no doubt of its truth. The only drawback on his happiness was the reflection that some weeks must elapse before he could return to England.

He felt assured that Lord Erpingham would now be anxious to atone for the wrong he had formerly done, in believing the calumnies of Egbert. After long indulging this consoling thought he had sunk into tranquil sleep, when he was abruptly disturbed by a loud outcry and a confused

noise. Clifford endeavoured to pass to the deck, but was bluntly admonished to keep below by one who, armed with a sword, and supported by others equally well provided, called to him at that moment,—

"He who desires life, let him keep where he now abides."

"What may this mean?" Clifford demanded, with impatience.

"Mean what it may, it shall not peril thee or thine, so thou remainest quiet. Offer to come up, and death shall requite thy daring."

"Is it even so? — Then am I already a prisoner?"

"Thy durance will be brief."

Clifford did not think it wise to disregard the counsel he had received. Though excited by the sound of fighting, he refrained from springing on the deck, as he had at first prepared to do, not so much on account of the threat held out, as from the embarrassment he felt with respect to the subject of contention, and the impossibility of distinguishing the parties, if he attempted to mingle in the fray.

Silence was soon restored. The groans of men apparently dying had been heard, but these were soon followed by the melancholy sound of something falling into the sea, and it was certain that the torture of the sufferers had been terminated by their being thrown overboard. Clifford was called upon, by his assumed name, to make his appearance on deck. Elinor trembled when she heard this summons, and offered to detain him.

"Release me, Elinor," said he; "be the danger what it may, I must confront it."

"But not alone. I will with thee. If murder be intended, we will die together."

"Come forth, Master Howard," cried the voice which had been heard before, and which he now recognized as that of a man who had been, like himself, a passenger.

"I obey," Clifford replied. Then, addressing himself to Elinor, he said, "Remain below; your presence can nothing avail; if there be danger, my speech may avert it. Remain, I entreat."

She reluctantly abandoned her hold, and he stepped on deck.

"How now?" he exclaimed; "what has chanced?"

"The ship has changed masters, and he who lately com-

manded is bait for fishes. It is therefore deemed meet to inform you that if you covet not to join him, you must yield obedience to those who are now masters."

"And who are they?"

"Brave and determined spirits, who will suffer no vain terrors or foolish qualms to oppose their perfect success."

"By that, I guess, I am to learn that, met by refractory conduct on my part, no foolish qualm will prevent some brave and determined spirit from putting me to death."

"Your capacity is good, and you have not misjudged our meaning."

Elinor now appeared by his side: Clifford turned to bid her retire, but without heeding his speech, she rushed between him and the spokesman of the armed party, and falling on her knees, implored mercy.

"His life," said the passenger, "is in his own keeping. If he is wise, your prayer is needless; if foolish, it will prove useless."

"And may I ask your present purpose?" said Clifford.

"You shall know so much of it as imports you. The ship is no longer on her way to Spain."

"And whither goes she, then?"

"That you may know hereafter. Let it suffice that you shall be landed on the English coast, so you observe certain conditions."

"Name them."

"The first that you keep below, save when permission is given to appear on deck; and the second, should it be our hap to be boarded on the way, you observe silence."

"I have seen nothing of which I can report."

"If you delay to promise that which is required, you shall have no opportunity to tell tales. When we have set you at large, report what you list; we now but claim your promise of strict silence for a brief season. This refused, it only remains to silence you for ever.—Your answer?"

"Though I shrink not from the risk of life in a fair cause, I covet not distinction by vainly sacrificing it. Disclaiming all participation in the works of blood ye have done, or may hereafter do, I yield assent."

This answer appeared to give satisfaction. Clifford was ordered below, and both he and Elinor heard the new masters of the ship engaged in earnest debate. Sometimes

the name of Howard was uttered with warmth, and, as they thought, with indignation; but of the latter they were not certain. It was, however, at all events, clear that their fate was undecided, and that the masters of it had doubts whether their own security would not be best consulted by putting those who had become their prisoners to the sword.

The weather became stormy; and for several days they had to contend with a succession of hurricanes. This, though unpleasant, was no unfortunate circumstance for Clifford, as the desperadoes who had thought of depriving him of life, were too busily engaged, contending with the elements, to think much of him.

At length the ship neared land, and Clifford, being called on deck, was informed that he might pass to the shore. It was evening, and he perceived the vessel was riding in a spacious bay. A tall rock surmounted by a castle met his eye, when he looked to the land, and at the foot of the rock he perceived several clusters of dwellings irregularly disposed, but forming altogether a neighbourhood rather considerable in point of extent.

"You may depart if you list. We have kept faith with you, and you have had no opportunity of breaking it with us, so neither party has cause to complain. Now you are free to remain with us, or go."

"I shall then claim the privilege of departing straight."

"Be it so," cried the leader. "You are free to act as you will, and to tell what you know, if you are so minded, to all you meet."

"Am I free to go?"

"The boat is ready to land you. All I would say farther is this. Arrived here, we have no further apprehension, and care not who hears of our exploit. But for your own sake you would do well to be cautious how you name it, as, not being thus advertised, you might have been likely to do; for those who will fall in your way will probably be our friends, and we may yet meet again."

"Enough, I understand your threat."

"I threaten not."

"Again I will try to hit thy comprehension. Fearing nothing that you may say or do, in no unkind mood, I would warn you to keep your tongue under good wholesome check; for mistaking us for sea-robbers, you might so describe our

doings as to put those who expect us here in fume, and thereby bring yourself once more into jeopardy."

"Your counsel, for its goodness, may merit much thanks; but, truth to tell, I am little likely, I think, to make mistake as to your quality; and nothing complaining of your conduct so far as I myself am concerned, I bid you farewell."

He then assisted Elinor to get into the boat, descended after her, and they were rowed to the shore.

Clifford had no doubt that the vessel had been seized for piratical purposes, and expected to see the men who carried him from the ship return forthwith. They, however, landed, and, without troubling themselves to bestow a single word on him, began to climb the rock on which the castle frowned.

To gain a resting place for the night became the object of Clifford. He saw a small inn, and to this he advanced. The landlord of it met him at the door, but with no very cordial greeting. He entered, and found himself in the midst of from twelve to twenty men. Surprised at this, he would have retired, but was prevented by those nearest the door.

"No drawing back, friend," cried one of them. "If you are no spy, never be alarmed."

"I feel no alarm, but wish not to intrude."

"Stand not upon fashions here, but tell us at once what you seek at Scarborough?"

"If I am now in Scarborough, I seek nothing but the way to London."

"And whence came you last?"

"From Greenwich."

"Oh! you are from the court, then? And by what hap did you chance to learn that the best road from Greenwich to London was by the way of Scarborough?"

"We came not willingly," said Elinor.

"The she bird begins to squeak. So then you pretend to have been forced to come on this errand?—You pause. Haply you have not heard me. That cap comes so low, it makes you deaf. Off with it straight."

"I hear right well," said Clifford, eagerly hoping to escape the exposure with which he was threatened; but in one moment his head was rudely uncovered, to the no small surprise of the by-standers.

"Is it so?" cried the examiner. "Nay, then, thou art not the man we suspected. Thou canst be no spy by profession, but thou hast rather been spied upon. In brief, how came you hither?"

"Being embarked for Spain, the ship was carried from the true mariners by others, and I have been unwillingly brought hither."

"And is the ship safe arrived?"

"Pass you to the shore, and you shall see her riding in the bay."

A shout burst from the whole company at this news, most of whom immediately left the room.

"The gallows and thy neck be ever strangers, for the tidings thou hast brought. Good cheer shall be at thy command this night, happen what may to-morrow. Though thy cropped ears tell honesty is not thy failing, still—"

"Give me leave one moment," cried Clifford, in a tone which from its firmness commanded attention. "Believe that it is possible for a man to suffer wrong without meriting disgrace, and I shall satisfy you that I am not the varlet you suppose."

"Never heed it. You are not the first that loved his neighbour's goods as his own, if he loved not his neighbour like himself."

"I have suffered through perjury, through the baseness of that now detected villain, Father Egbert, one of the priests of the Trinity."

"How say you? Were the side-flourishes of your skull lopped away on his account,—for aspersing him?"

"No, for telling truth."

"You then are called Clifford?"

"The same."

"Oh! then you are a verier miscreant than I first suspected, or last guessed you to be. It is too dark to hang to-night, but your varlet windpipe will scarcely endure the wear of another day."

"Are you then prepared to abet his cruelty?"

"We know the pious father well. His money has stood us in good stead; and but for the mangling he received from the mob some week or ten days past, he himself would have been in Scarborough by this. We cannot better show our gratitude to him, than by providing a hempen necklace for

you; so sing canticles all night, that you may be ready to kick the wind in the morning."

CHAPTER XLIV.

With ignominy to preserve my breath,
Is worse by infinite degrees than death;
But if I can't my life with honour save,
With honour I'll descend into my grave.

POMFRET.

CLIFFORD believed the termination of his sufferings to be at hand; but when the morning arrived, that prompt execution, which he looked for, did not take place. His situation, however, was not, in his own view of it, materially improved by that circumstance, as he was only offered life on terms which he was resolute not to accept.

When the rebellion with which Captain Cobler and the Earl of Poverty were connected broke out, the original rising took place at Scarborough. Though it was the object of the parties to advance to London, several of the ringleaders, fearing that their plans might be frustrated by a rapid march of the King's forces in Yorkshire, before they should be sufficiently strong to give battle, were desirous of securing a retreat by sea. They therefore considered that if a ship of good size could be secured, and kept always ready for their reception, a most important point would be gained. To accomplish this, some of the most daring among them, including several mariners, found their way to London; under various pretences got on board the vessel in which Clifford proposed passing to Spain, and acted the part which has been described.

The monk who had taken the name of *Captain Cobler*, and Father Egbert, had long been in communication. The latter, alarmed by the actions of the King, never doubted but the establishment over which he presided would one day fall before the rapacity of Henry; and therefore took care to dispose of as much of the property belonging to the monastery as he could alienate, without being prematurely exposed to

suspicion. Deceived by the obstreperous ravings of an exasperated rabble, who had been employed and fed by those establishments which it was the policy of the King to crush, he was of opinion, that to lead a force to London, in such strength to compel the monarch to abandon his confiscating policy, would be a task of little risk and difficulty. Under this impression, Egbert scrupled not, in conjunction with Captain Cobler, to advance considerable sums in aid of the means which the other parties to the plot had at their disposal; and this being known to the rebels, he was as much extolled in Yorkshire, as he was execrated in London.

And with those feelings of attachment and approbation, which his readiness to embark in the same cause with them, and his liberal support of that cause had inspired, their first thought was, that to hang Clifford for his former enmity to their patron, would be an acceptable mark of respect to him, and a singularly patriotic action in itself.

But when repose had calmed their spirits, and reflection returned, some reluctance was felt to execute the threat which had been pronounced. They were moved by the affliction of Elinor; and the unconscious smiles of the infant, not less than the tears of the mother, induced a desire to spare the intended victim. That Clifford had not sought to harm them, but had originally a very different destination in view, was proved by their friends from the ship; and this favourable circumstance induced them to offer him his life, on condition of his joining them in *the Pilgrimage of Grace.*

On almost any terms he would have been glad to pass to London, but to go thither as a rebel, had danger been wholly out of the question, he could not reconcile his mind. His exultation in the discovery which vindicated his character, grew mainly out of the reflection that it restored him to the favour of Lord Erpingham. The esteem of one whom he had from infancy revered, putting wholly aside interested considerations, he most highly prized. But here, his future fortunes were concerned. That aid which the peer would have withheld, and which Clifford would have disdained to seek or to receive, while still pointed at as the degraded perjurer, would now, he had abundant reason for supposing, be rapturously bestowed. But very different would be the case, should he present himself before Lord Erpingham, (supposing this could be done with safety,) stained with the

guilt of rebellion. He felt that it would be quite as well for his fame, that the stigma, which he had previously borne, should have remained unrefuted, as that he should now merit the appellation of traitor. He had then but to choose between new shame and death, and he unhesitatingly decided for the latter.

Time was granted that he might reconsider the subject. The enormities of the King, the sufferings of the people, the insults offered to religion, were pressed on his attention; but he remained inflexible. It was at this juncture that news arrived of the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Lord Erpingham. He rejected the whole statement, as a fabrication; but such vouchers were speedily produced, that to entertain a doubt on the subject was impossible.

Clifford still refused to fall into the ranks of the rebels. But when intelligence came that his uncle—that his friend—that Lord Erpingham had perished on a scaffold, his rage and his grief knew no bounds, and in the stormy emotion which assailed him, he exclaimed,—

"Nay, if the king turn traitor to himself, and can thus, with remorseless tyranny, doom his most loyal subjects to death, it is not for me to think of my fealty more. No heart ever inhabited a human bosom more faithful to duty and to its sovereign, than that which has died with Lord Erpingham. Since *he* has been immolated, no man is safe; and in such a case, rebellion is virtue. Now tender me your oath, and give me a sword.—I am, I will be yours."

He was taken at his word, and sworn to be faithful to the conspirators. They considered that in him they had gained no mean acquisition. The name of Lord Erpingham's nephew they judged of itself important, and they attached some value to the fury by which he was animated, and to the strength which it was obvious he possessed, to give some effect to that fury. None doubted, but Egbert himself, when informed of what had been done, would rejoice in the circumstance.

Clifford accompanied a party from Scarborough, to the rebel head-quarters at Doncaster. He was not a little shocked by the vulgarity of the leaders, to whom he was introduced. Where such ignorance and lack of talent were found, he could not but anticipate miscarriage. To reflect on this was now worse than useless; he endeavoured to

dismiss the idea, and to inspire courage, by affecting confidence.

On the day of his arrival, he perceived a man attentively regarding him. Now he crouched and advanced as if resolved to accost him—then he retired as if anxious to avoid, and then again he approached, and at length spoke.

"Pleaseth it your worship, to make pause for some short space. I would not ask such grace, but as an old customer, when your gentility was in the ale-vending line of commerce at Canterbury."

Clifford now accompanied Nick Bray, and supposing him disposed to repeat his former insolence, he contemptuously replied—

"Peace, fellow, or I shall, with little delay, requite your saucy tongue, by wringing your ears."

"I hope, my gentle master, you are too magnanimous to take a mean advantage, by molesting the ears of a man who has no chance of doing so much for you. I pray you mercy, I meant not to move your choler by hinting that your ears are elsewhere bestowed, but only to say that I, by reason of my weakness, can in no wise contend against you."

"Then be civil, or at least be silent," said Clifford, and passed on.

"Craving your good worship's further grace, I cannot be silent, but desire to be most abundantly civil, inasmuch as I would obtain a favour."

"I have no favour to bestow."

"It is not for myself that I would solicit, but there is one for whom you, before your mishap, Master Clifford, had no small regard, who was, like myself, a customer at Canterbury, when you kept the ale-booth."

Clifford looked disdainfully on the jester. The flippant manner, in which he was reminded of his late occupation, induced suspicion that derision was intended; but the plaintive tone of the speaker, intimated what was very remote from a disposition to frolic, and he inclined to believe that Bray had really something to impart.

"So please you, I speak of young Master Edmund, who is now hard by."

"Edmund! Is Edmund here? No disporting, varlet, or the bones in your rogue's carcase shall not escape so well as they did on a former occasion, when you dared—"

"I cry you mercy, but I meant not to flout, till you went the wrong way with me, for what I designed should be perfectly harmless. But for Edmund, he is now in yonder tent, and much I fear it will go hardly with him."

"What does he there?"

"He has been detained since yesterday seven-night, and they will neither let him go free, nor remain unmolested. They demand that he shall join with them, as I guess you have done."

"And have striven much to prevail with him?"

"Most powerfuly. And right good was the eloquence employed, for I heard part of it. 'The King,' said they, 'is a tyrant, whose sway may not be borne, seeing he has taken away the right of sanctuary.' Now, Master Clifford, when you consider how hard this is on robbers and murderers in a Christian land, seeing, unlike other bodies of men, they are not used to come forward to claim their rights, you, no doubt, must feel that the worthy host of which you are a most worthy member, do well to bestir themselves in such a cause; for it cannot be doubted, that the particular right in question is one by which no small number of them may profit."

Clifford listened no further, but passed hastily into the tent, forced his way through those who were nearest the entrance, and approached Edmund. Aske was sitting in a chair of state, and haughtily endeavouring to prove the righteousness of the cause in which the rebels were embarked. Lord Darcy, and the Archbishop of York, who had joined the pilgrims, stood near him. The Earl of Poverty, who had now got a dirty ruff round his neck, still wearing his old habiliments, leaned against the chair, his ragged bonnet clasped in one hand, the arm belonging to which was placed a-kimbo, while his long thin legs were displayed to the greatest advantage, by the left spindle being thrown across its neighbour to complete the easy elegance of the attitude which he had been pleased to adopt.

Aske, whose ideas of dignity corresponded with the imposing appearance of his friend, the Earl of Poverty, endeavoured to be most impressive on this occasion.

"Many's the time and often, that you have had an opportunity of declaring yourself, being minded to do so, the friend of liberty and true religion. But still unmoved, you

hearken not to the kind words of counsel, which I have addressed to your ear."

"The fellow is *contemptious*," cried the Earl of Poverty. "He heeds not our rank and importance."

"I have not wished to give you displeasure," said Edmund.

"By the coals that roasted St. Lawrence you had better not, for if I but utter one word you may never speak again."

"Here your power is not questioned; but with all disposition to abstain from giving offence, I must say I do not see that such manifold ills result from denying those who have violated the law, the right of sanctuary, which ought to arm the subject against his monarch."

"And mean you also to say that we have no worthy cause for rising, when the King most impiously and unnaturally refuses to acknowledge as legitimate the Lady Mary? Shall the hope of the nation—that lovely and sweetest dispositioned princess, whose piety and moreover whose gentleness surpasseth that of all the world beside, be kept for ever distant from the throne?"

"In this, methinks, the king should have a voice, and the people are not largely interested in the decision he may come to now, seeing that a right royal and most princely imp may yet be born, who shall of right stand in succession before the Lady Mary?"

"Nay, if the monstrous injustice of the King in this move you not, it is hard to say what will! Peradventure you will laud his sacrilegious and rapacious doings in despoiling monasteries and convents."

"I deplore some of the acts which he has ordered or permitted, but well I know that the dissolute conduct of the inmates of divers of them might justify a measure of some harshness."

"So has it been said by glozing visitors, who sought in vain to win bribes for their fair report, from the holy men they communed with. But this is all egregiously false. You pretend to believe it, and think the King has acted most unmercifully, forgetful how by him the shrines of the saints have been pillaged, and that he has even lately burned the sacred remains of St. Thomas of Canterbury."

"I defend not acts like these."

"But feeling as an Englishman should feel, why pant you not to revenge them?"

"Good Captain, spare your anger," cried Clifford, "and let me have speech with your prisoner. I shall tell him perhaps what will stir his heart more than even the destruction of the venerated relics which you have mentioned."

The astonishment of Edmund was great to find Clifford among the motley group by which he was surrounded. The latter proceeded—

"That which has moved me to join heart and hand, with those who are now entering on *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, will, or I much mistake, produce a like effect on you. Know you that Lord Erpingham has been added to the other victims of tyranny?"

"I know that he has been charged with treason; but I also know that he cannot fail to clear himself."

"I sorrow for the shock which I must inflict:—already hath Lord Erpingham been executed."

"Impossible!"

"Trust me, I speak the truth. I doubted his condemnation, till strong proofs were given. The tidings of his death followed speedily upon it; and he has shared the fate of his friend, Sir Thomas More. This has thrown me into the ranks of the pilgrims: for when there can be no security for virtue like his, the claim to allegiance I hold to be forfeited."

Edmund turned pale, and sickening with horror, exclaimed—

"He is—he must be—the King must be the monster that he has been named. You rightly judged that this would decide me. Clifford, call me thy comrade."

No time was lost in tendering the oath.

"You are sworn," said Aske, the moment the ceremony had concluded: "see that you keep well your oath."

A scornful laugh played on his features while he spoke, and he added—

"Whether Lord Erpingham be dead or not, you are bound to the *pilgrimage*."

"And, moreover," added his friend, "you have now the honour to be companion in arms to the Earl of Poverty, and the most magnanimous Captain Cobler."

Edmund was then permitted to retire. Sad misgivings

came over him when he recalled the last words of Aske. Clifford having ascertained the condemnation of his uncle, was easily induced to credit the assertion that he had been executed: but certain intelligence soon reached them that the peer had been pardoned by the capricious Henry; and the tale of his death was then proved to be wholly a fabrication, to shake that loyalty which other means had assailed in vain.

The reflections were sad which grew on the discovery of this treacherous and fraudulent conduct; but the friends thus unfortunately re-united had little time to indulge them; for the Duke of Norfolk, at the head of a powerful army, now approached. Retreat was impracticable, and it was decided to risk their all on the chance of a battle. Fain would Clifford have removed Elinor from the vicinity of the field. The jester offered to conduct her to some less exposed situation, but indifferent to danger herself, she awaited, with trembling anxiety, the result of the contest for him in whom her all of hope was bound up, careless of her own existence, if her lord should fall.

CHAPTER XLV.

She's sad as one used to it, and she seems
Rather to welcome the end of misery
Than to shun it.

WEBSTER.

PREPARING for the battle, Clifford sought no sleep on the night preceding the morning on which it was expected to be given. Elinor assisted him; she sighed as he attired himself for the field; and, this task performed, her grief could not be restrained.

"Forgive me, Clifford," she said—"but my heart is sad. I cannot look upon you thus prepared without regarding you as one doomed to perish in the unhappy struggle; and see, with all your proud bearing, not the warrior who advances to triumph and glory, but the victim bound for the sacrifice."

"This is weakness, Elinor. War is a dreadful game, but all who play it are not losers. The hope which befriended you under other circumstances, ought to sustain you now."

"Heretofore, Clifford, I hoped that evils already felt might be removed, but now I tremble for the accumulated ruin which hangs over our heads, and which you are resolute to meet, when it might, as I think, be avoided. War is indeed a dreadful game, but rebellion is one still more odious and desperate."

"I am sad to lift my sword against my countrymen, and Heaven knows how sincerely I should rejoice if I might be spared the necessity of shedding a brother's blood."

"The thought is appalling, for with it comes the miserable reflection, that death in such a cause saves not from obloquy, but on the contrary affixes an indelible stain."

"I must not think of that; all who struggle against tyranny must incur a similar risk. If their daring prove successful they live in story as heroes, if unfortunate, they perish as traitors, and till the cause in which they fell prevails, shame is considered their portion."

He was yet speaking when Edmund entered, attired like himself.

"Well, brother traitor," Clifford exclaimed, "for traitors we must be called if we sustain defeat, what is the news of the morning?"

"None of vast importance has reached me. A deluge of rain has fallen, and the river is unusually swollen, but the whole camp is in motion, and we are now looked for."

"Then let us forth."

"Clifford, Clifford," exclaimed Elinor, "this is sad parting!"

"The soldier must not think when he is expected to fight. True, I may fall, and my son may be called the offspring of Clifford the traitor; but I may, and something whispers that I shall return in safety."

"Were it an honest cause I would be more patient and resigned."

"Madam," said Edmund, "it is now too late for us to review the cause in which we are engaged. True it is we have been duped by fraud and falsehood, and placed in situations which otherwise would never have been ours; but now we cannot fly without incurring the guilt of perjury, and exposing ourselves to the charge of cowardice."

"You would not counsel this, Elinor; you would not have me act a recreant part?" said Clifford.

"By my love, no. Dear as your life is to me, I would not see you survive your honour, content, if the sad alternative must be proffered, to be the brave man's widow, rather than the coward's wife."

"There spoke thy heart. By heaven thy returning courage gives me new strength. Now do I feel invincible. Come to the field."

"To the pond, I suppose you mean," cried Nick Bray, who then entered, "for the field, as you call it, is all under water. Sit down, gentles, and make matters pleasant; you will not be wanted, for to-day none but geese can fight."

"Spare your ribaldry, jester," said Clifford; "if your errand have any meaning, let us speedily know what it is, in as few words as may be."

"Allow me to take off my tippet first, for you see what a sopping I have got in coming here with the good news."

"What good news?"

"Why, that there will be no fighting to-day."

"This cannot be true; even now all is preparation, and the clamour which prevails is not for nothing!"

"To be sure not, this racket is about the flood; all were as mute as mice, expecting the battle, but when, from the river overflowing its banks, it was quite clear that there would be no coming to blows to-day, then we all got bravely noisy, and talked of what we would have done if we had but got to the enemy. I have been dealing out heroics for the last half hour, to the great benefit of my reputation as I trust; for I look, from the brave things I have said to day, to escape having my courage put to the proof for weeks to come."

"But the bustle which is now heard seems not that of exultation."

"Nor is it now, for the flood continues to increase so fast, that they begin to get frightened. To see the poor animals of all sorts and sizes that form this rabblement, which some call a rebel army, urging their shoeless trotters and shirtless backs this way and that, images to me the loading of Noah's ark, though, as the patriarch had the selection of his companions, I should guess he got more tolerably looking cattle to accompany him, than our brave comrades."

Clifford and Edmund proposed to go forth, to ascertain if indeed the waters were so out that the battle could not take place.

"By the mass, you may spare yourselves the trouble," cried the jester, "and remain dry while you can. The falling torrents have damped the courage of those who never had courage to damp till the fight was off, and the rascals are now afraid of drowning, who, if justice be done to their worthlessness, may certainly look for a different sort of death."

Elinor raised her eyes to heaven in grateful acknowledgment of the interposition of Providence—such she considered it—and blessed the deluge which had at least deferred the shedding of blood.

On visiting the intended scene of conflict, Clifford and Edmund found that the jester had not exaggerated. The Don had overflowed its banks, and expanding itself over the plain, its regular limits were lost in the vast sheet of water now presented to the eye.

Many days passed before the flood had sufficiently subsided, to make it possible to resume military operations. In the meantime, the rebel forces, being but scantily provided, began rapidly to diminish. To Clifford it appeared that it would be policy to court a battle, as victory might relieve them from all their difficulties, while defeat could but overwhelm with that ruin, which already seemed about to crush them, without striking a blow.

But the views of Aske, and of those who took the lead in the affairs of the insurgents, were very different. They saw the danger arising from the defection of such numbers of their followers; but were of opinion that in the present state of things more might be gained by negociation than by fighting. A treaty had, therefore, been proposed, and the conferences connected with it were artfully spun out by the Duke of Norfolk, who commanded the royal army, under the pretence of sending to London for instructions, as different matters were brought into debate, but in reality for the purpose of starving the malcontents, and thinning their ranks by desertion, so that at least they should be incapable of resistance. In this he succeeded. Aske found it necessary to abate of his insolence, and to bound his claims to demands falling very short of those which had been originally put forth, and boldly insisted upon.

Edmund and Clifford had begun to suspect some sinister design, when one day Nick Bray burst hastily upon them, and, with a most significant look, claimed their attention.

"Lend me your ears, gentles; I crave your grace, Master Clifford, I meant no reflection on misfortune; so lend me your ear, Master Edmund, and you not having such a thing handy, Master Clifford, accommodate me with your hearing, while I unfold what it much imports you to know."

"If you have aught to tell," said Clifford, "proceed without farther preface."

"That will I do with all speed. Passing by the side of the river, I just now encountered Father Egbert."

"Indeed!"

"Being not a little frightened, I prepared to run away, but it was too late, for, though the mob handled him very roughly, they unluckily left him his eyes."

"And spoke you to him?"

"I could do no less by an old acquaintance; and instead of complaint or reproach, he gave me a very gracious reception; for, as good luck would have it, he had not missed me, when he was found himself where he had no business to be. He supposed that I, like him, had come to Yorkshire but to join the rebels. I did not undeceive him; but lamented the desertion of the pilgrims, and he condoled with me on it, but added to comfort me, that it would not end so fatally as I might suppose, for a treaty was just on the point of being signed, which would secure pardon to all, but a very few, who were to be given up to the Duke by their comrades."

"Is it so?"

"Be assured I speak the truth."

"Know you the exceptions which are to be made?"

"I am sorry to say I have not learned the whole of them, so I just stepped here to mention, that you and Master Edmund furnish two of the names. This he told with great exultation. So, while you think of that, if you hold it needful, I will go and ask about the rest, only I would not have you remain here to await the answer I have to bring back."

"This result," said Clifford, "is what we had a right to expect, after the fraud which betrayed us into the ranks of

the rebel crew. Doomed to destruction, it is all in vain to strive with fate."

"Say not so," cried Elinor, "but fly with all expedition."

"But the means? Though thou wouldst endure much, and dare all, thy speed will not suffice to enable us to escape the peril. While flying with thee and thy little one, it shall be impossible to elude observation."

"Then away without me; it is not my life they seek. Nay, pause not to reply, or I shall die with terror. I and my child can follow when opportunity offers for assuring me of thy safety."

"This counsel is wisely, bravely given," said Edmund; "attend to it straight."

"There is no time for pause," the jester remarked; "you must forthwith make good your retreat, or expect a royal escort to London."

"Away—away!" cried Elinor, impatiently. "Haste to mingle with the retiring fugitives, to the end that you may avoid the snare prepared for you."

"Oh, Elinor! can I leave thee thus?"

"Nay, do not delay, or you kill me by remaining here."

"All the fiends of darkness seem to have conspired to accumulate disgrace on this devoted head. My own misconduct gained me the name of profligate; the baseness of another threw on me the shame of perjury; recent fraud has placed me in the ranks of treason,—and now, Elinor, can you desire me to merit the reproach of deserting my wife and child in the moment of danger?"

"To remain with them can avail nothing."

"But it were more manly to die in their defence, than to seek safety in ignominious flight."

"Frenzy is not manliness. I selfishly require you to fly now, when you cannot protect me, that you may live to be my protector at a future day. Hark! I hear approaching footsteps."

"You had better run, my masters," said Bray: "in any case I must, till I get fairly away from you; or else I am afraid a member of my family, for whom I have a very great regard, will be lifted for an hour or so a little nearer heaven than he could wish to be, in his present unprepared state."

"If you make your election to remain," said Edmund, addressing himself to Clifford, "I shall do the same."

"Gentles," vociferated Bray, "only think what a thing it is to have one's goodly form swung by means of a twist of hemp round the neck. Prove that you have heads by using your feet and taking to your heels. Never stand looking at one another, but do as I do. Follow a fool's example, and be wise."

With these words he made his exit. Clifford still lingered; but at length the impassioned entreaties of Elinor prevailed. She named to him a friend of her father's who resided in York, to whom she advised him to repair; there she was confident he might be concealed, and thither, in a few days, she proposed to accompany him. Mingling tears, and exchanging embraces, they separated.

The house which had been assigned to Clifford, while his accession to the rebel cause was deemed of importance, stood in a garden at the extremity of the town. Scarcely had he quitted it with Edmund, when Elinor heard a low murmur without. She looked from the window, and perceived that the building was beset by armed men; and at the same instant the door of the apartment in which she had been left was rudely burst open, and six or eight of the insurgents presented the points of their halberts to cut off all escape.

"Seize them alive," exclaimed Father Egbert, who now pressed forward far enough to look into the room, not forgetting to take excellent care to keep within the points of the halberts. He started with rage and amazement at perceiving that those he sought were not there.

"Where is Clifford and his companion?" he demanded.

"I know not," Elinor replied.

"Can it be possible that they have already fled? Fly—pursue them in all directions. Use all dispatch in this matter; and remember, if they escape, some of you must hang for them."

The man who attended him obeyed the command, and promptly retired.

"This way they ran," cried a voice without, which both Egbert and Elinor knew to be that of the jester. "Run fast, you varlets; but mind, they are fearfully armed; so stick close to your halberts, or you shall never be able to deal with them."

While Egbert was fiercely giving his orders, the wife of

Clifford had fallen on her knees before him to implore mercy; she was still in a supplicating posture, when she heard the jester co-operating, as she supposed, with those who sought her husband's life.

"They shall soon be taken, holy father," he now called out to Egbert, as he entered; "I saw them run towards the windmill: the wretches,—not to stay and be hanged for the good of their friends."

Thus speaking, his eye glanced on Elinor, who was still on the ground, and he instantly stepped forward to raise her; he was indignantly repelled, with the exclamation, "Avaunt, traitor!"

"I—I," stammered the jester; "if I—if I am a traitor, it's no more than people may say of your husband."

"Peace," cried Egbert; "pass you below, and see the prisoners safely bestowed."

The jester retired.

"Rise, fair one," said the abbot, addressing himself to Elinor; "eyes like thine should not waste their brightness in vain tears."

"Ah! let them not be vain—if you are a man, pity the anguish of a wretched wife."

"I do pity you."

"May I then hope," she eagerly inquired, "that you will allow pity to show itself in action?"

"Never doubt it. But hark!—the party sent in pursuit of the fugitives are here: I must see the captives secured, and will then return."

"Go not for such a purpose. Ah! let the destined victims pass free. Spare the unhappy Clifford!"

"At this moment I must look to them; but you, if you are wise, will be comforted; for if you desire it, I will yet provide for his escape. I will speedily revisit you, and then Clifford shall be free, if you continue anxious for his enlargement."

"For this bounty," cried Elinor, in a transport of joy, "accept my blessing and my thanks."

CHAPTER XLVI.

No pardon can be granted, he must die;
Must, or I hazard all; which yet I'd do,
To be obliged in one request by you:
And, maugre all the dangers I foresee,
Be mine this night, I'll set your husband free.

POMFRET.

ELINOR knew not to whom she had spoken. Though she more than once had met Egbert at Lord Erpingham's, as he was generally closetted with the peer, she had seen him but for a moment, as he passed to or from his Lordship's apartment. The long period which had elapsed since, had so far effaced his image from her memory, changed as his appearance was by the dress which he wore among the pilgrims, she suspected not, that when she invoked a blessing on him, she did so for the bitterest foe of her husband.

Heedless of her own safety, she thought not of escape; but when, as the ecclesiastic retired, she heard the key turn in the door, and found herself locked up, a suspicion came over her, which she could not easily subdue, though she endeavoured to persuade herself that there were no grounds for alarm.

Two hours were spent in anxious expectation. Elinor wept over her child, which, unconscious of the misery around it, slept on his parent's bosom. The hopes and fears, by which her breast had recently been torn, passed in melancholy review before her "mind's eye;" and, still musing on the sad retrospective, she heard not the opening of the door of the apartment, nor perceived that any one approached, till the jester stood near her. The indignation called forth by his late conduct was renewed by the manner of his unexpected appearance, and Elinor scornfully turned from him, without deigning to bestow a single word on the traitor, as she had not scrupled to call him, when they last met.

"I am sent here to tell you, and I am sorry for it, a story so sad that Will Somers himself, though surrounded as usual by a crowd determined to laugh, could not make it pleasant. I am ordered to tell you, I need not say by whom, that to save your husband's life is impossible."

Elinor trembled.

"This I have been told to say; but lady, I would fain whisper one word in your hear."

"Approach not, thou wretched betrayer."

"Be calm, and hear me."

"I have heard thee too much: it was thy accursed voice that directed the bloodhounds to the right track. But for thee, my brave Clifford might have escaped."

"What a grievous thing it is, that a woman will have all the talk to herself, and have it all her own way! But, mistress, if you would hear me—"

"Depart, I know thee not."

"Marry, then you might be a little more civil to a stranger.—What I was going to say was this, if you would throw a little kindness into that face, still beautiful, and give some small encouragement—"

"Base hind, be dumb!"

"One of us ought to be so.—Ha! 'tis now too late for explanation, and you must learn from another what I would fain have unfolded."

Egbert entered. Addressing Bray, he said,—

"Have you communicated the heavy tidings with which I sent you forward?"

The jester answered in the affirmative.

"Then you may away," cried Egbert. Bray lingered for some moments; but, again ordered to retire, he obeyed.

"Lady," said Egbert, "it is sad to be the bearer of evil news, or the voucher for its truth; but mine is the mournful task of confirming the intelligence which the fellow I sent to prepare you for my coming, has imparted. Your husband, being excepted by name from the general pardon which has been granted, must be given up to the soldiers of the King, and mercy is not in their thoughts."

"When I saw you before, you spoke of enabling him to escape."

"Difficulties, not then foreseen, stand in the way. To make the attempt might cost me my liberty, perhaps my life."

"Alas!"

"Nay, the escape of Lord Erpingham's nephew might cause the pardon to be revoked, and hundreds would die through his being permitted to live."

"That—that," faltered Elinor, "must be a vain fear. The King cannot be the monster you suppose."

"It is too probable, that his boundless ire would grasp with eagerness the mighty means of vengeance in his power."

Elinor wrung her hands with bitterness of heart, and looking to the small couch on which her infant reposed, she exclaimed, while a new flood of sorrow burst from her eyes,—

"My child! thou art fatherless."

"But fair one, say," Egbert resumed; "if, reckless of danger, one daring heart were found devoted enough to encounter the peril of incurring the hatred of his companions, and the wrath of his king, what return would he merit?"

"Oh, all that gratitude could yield on earth, and all that earnest prayer could win in heaven!"

"The first shall suffice."

"What mean you, sir!"

"That which gratitude may yield on earth: this is all that he claims, who has saved your husband."

"Who—who has done this?—where is the man?"

"He stands before you."

"I know not what I hear. Gracious Heaven, if this be a dream, never let me wake more!"

"Through my means," said Egbert, "your husband pursues his flight in safety."

"And flies he now towards York?"

"Ha!—Towards York!—O yes, he goes where he originally intended to proceed: I—*I*," said Egbert with emphasis, "pitying your woe, took care to let him have a fair opportunity."

"How shall I acknowledge this kindness?—"

"The way is easy: while he flies from you, thoughtful only for himself, let me be requited by your remaining with me."

If, from some tremendous shock of nature, the earth had opened beneath her feet, and presented an abyss into which she must descend still living, Elinor would have felt but slight emotion, compared with the horrible alarm, which now almost bereft her of sense and life, when, taking her by the hand, her pretended friend presented himself on his knees.

"You seem amazed," he said; "nor can I feel astonished at it: you could little expect that *I* would save Clifford from an ignominious death; and you from the disgrace

which his execution could not fail to bring on you, knowing, as you must, the hatred which he bore to me."

Elinor heard his words, but comprehended not their meaning. He went on:

"Still your wonder subsides not. You have promised gratitude; now let your promise be fulfilled. From another, Clifford had vainly sought that grace he owes to Egbert."

Elinor faintly repeated the name, in the consternation and surprise which she sustained from this new shock. Rendered motionless by the excess of her wonder, till now she had not perceived that he retained her hand; but in the moment that the name of Egbert burst on her ear, she indignantly released herself from his grasp, and the power of utterance, which had been withdrawn from her by the first disclosure of the miscreant's object, was restored.

"Thou recreant fiend!" she exclaimed; "thy baseness made me at first start. I judged that I saw before me the enemy of mankind; but thy detested name explains and unriddles all; and now I trace thy lineaments, I am somewhat restored, to find that I speak but with a mortal wretch."

"Is this the gratitude so liberally promised, but now, to him who saved your husband?"

"I owe no gratitude to him who would save his life to blast his honour."

"He would not be so scrupulous, where life was at stake."

"Not even knowledge of thine own baseness can make thee, even *thee*, believe the calumny. He would not live with shame."

"The absence of his ears give proof of that," Egbert sarcastically replied.

"No, monster! I repeat it,—he would not live with shame; but shame can only arise from consciousness of guilt. My husband never would grovel through a life of ignominy; though in the hope of just vengeance, a hope I trust in God not vainly cherished, he could survive a calamity. But his wretched destroyer is already known, and detected crime has made his name the subject of just execration."

"Beware,—in time beware, I say. You shall repent this fury."

"Never!"

"This instant shall you bitterly repent it," he replied, in a tone of raging menace.

"Wouldst thou fright me by sword or dagger?—Bring forth thy weapon: I defy thee."

"Your courage soon will cool: my rising wrath shall teach humility."

"Thy wrath and thee I laugh to scorn. I stand not on the privilege of my sex; for that I know, though all sufficient with the good and brave, can avail nothing with thee; but, woman as I am, I fear not. By Heaven, I feel my indignation give such strength that I could play the Amazon,—beat thee to the earth, and tear thy guilty heart from its polluted home."

"Enough;—I have proved thy gratitude: now let me whisper to thy prudence, that the danger is not past. Thy folly has revealed the place to which Clifford would repair. Remember this, and prepare to deck thy countenance with all its softest, most atoning smiles, to give me pleasure."

"None but the smile of measureless contempt can fall on thee."

"Have you reflected, that this perverseness must cost your husband his life?"

"What would thy baseness wring from a torn heart?"

"You know the alternative which I have named."

"Is there no other?"

"None."

"To God, then, I commend my Clifford's spirit."

"And doom his body to the scaffold?"

"If he may only be saved by my degradation—yes. Since such the hard decree, he must submit."

"He will not thank you for this mark of love. To die is pain; but tenfold anguish will oppress the heart of the unhappy Clifford in his last moments, to know that his doom was pronounced by the wife of his bosom."

"Inhuman!—You muster all that is most appalling in terrible array against a lonely trembling wife, and seek to crush virtue beneath the horrid weight of terror and despair. But you will not succeed: no; Clifford will never reproach me with his death, because I am faithful to my duty. I but make the election which he would dictate, could he hear the infamous proposition."

"Indeed!—methinks you would do well to afford him an

opportunity of speaking for himself: at least you might pause till his voice can be heard."

"It needs not, monster!—for I know his heart, and all the thoughts and feelings which inhabit it, and have no cause to hesitate, were he here even, while his tongue could fashion them into words."

"Then let the consequence of your decision fall on him. When too late, he will repent that he was not permitted to choose for himself."

"And who would dare to tender him the choice?—thou would'st not like the task: for, even in the dungeon's gloom, thy timid wickedness would shrink from naming it to him; rightly judging, that in the moment which saw thy errand performed, the very chain which bound his gallant limbs would strike the tempter dead."

"Since you are thus resolved," Egbert furiously replied, "I will reason no more. But while I hasten to give Clifford his death, you, handed over to the lawless hands of the incensed rabble from whom he has fled, shall find, too late, that there is a degradation surpassing that at which your senseless pride revolts."

Obedient, as Elinor could not but conclude, to some unseen signal, the door was abruptly forced, and those who had presented themselves at an earlier hour again appeared. She believed the moment arrived for the execution of the prosecutor's terrible threat. Egbert stood by the couch, on which the child, awakened by the noise, still reclined: his ferocious glance seemed to select it as the first object of vengeance; a halbert was pointed in that direction. The frantic mother threw herself before the weapon's point, to shield the infant, and clasping it to her bosom, she sunk fainting on the floor.

CHAPTER XLVII.

———For him,
Life's cup, embittered to the brim,
Stood drugged with sorrows.

GRATTAN.

THE narrative must now go back to circumstances, which from the period at which they occurred, ought perhaps to have been earlier noticed. It was in the Tower of London that Lord Erpingham had the first opportunity of embracing his daughter, after a melancholy separation which had continued through many years. The meeting was one which called forth emotions very opposite in their nature. They exulted in the discovery which had brought them together; but in proportion as their joy was great for this, their affliction was extreme at the prospect they had before them of a new, a speedy, an eternal separation.

At almost any former period, Lord Erpingham could have welcomed death with more satisfaction. The love of life had been rekindled by the recognition of his children, but he disdained to pray for its extension, on conditions which were at variance with his honour and his conscience. He was urged by many to acknowledge the justice of his sentence, as that was the surest way of moving the King to mercy. To make such acknowledgment would be to confess guilt, and since of this his heart was wholly unconscious, he could not consent to an unmanly sacrifice of truth. Of the two evils, to him it seemed the lesser to prepare for the block.

Firm to this resolution, when Sir Geoffrey Brandon, who had lately gained favour with the King, waited on him to endeavour to induce the required submission, the Peer replied:—

"I have been guilty of no disloyalty, but adhering to the religion of my ancestors, the head of their church is the head of mine. If His Highness, who once so gloriously achieved the high title of *Fidei Defensoris*, has discovered that he was in error, he does right to act on his altered opinion; but I, not having been so fortunate, cannot regulate

my thoughts, in matters of religion, by the understanding of another."

"But your newly-found children," Sir Geoffrey answered; "think of them, and reflect how seriously their interests must be affected, by your suffering the punishment of death for treason."

"That thought affects me, but I am much consoled, by the reflection that I have never merited such an end. Since I cannot choose but suffer death undeservedly, or to do that to save life, which in my judgment would deserve death, I ought not and will not pause on the course to be pursued."

This determination was considered fatal to his life; but when his answer was borne to the King, Henry admired the constancy of his prisoner as much as he condemned his obstinacy; and, in a fit of generosity, the pardon of Lord Erpingham received the royal signature.

Joy not to be described prevailed through the metropolis, when this act of lenity was known. Ferdinand and Mariana believed their troubles terminated; and Lord Erpingham, though not often very sanguine, was inclined to adopt the same opinion.

"At length," said he, "I have reached that haven in which I may safely cast anchor, and remain, through the few remaining days which Providence may lend me, undisturbed by the storms which agitate the rest of the world."

"Blessed beyond measure, blessed shall we be," cried Ferdinand, "after the fearful tempests we have known, seeing we are at length permitted to enjoy the blissful calm which now awaits us. Mariana, no longer dismayed by the dread of a convent's gloom, shall henceforth dwell in safety beneath an indulgent father's roof; seeing she is released from her vows by the disgrace and dissolution of the sisterhood which claimed them."

"I know not," said Lord Erpingham, "that I could consent to her shaking off the restraint to which she had submitted herself, though this is sanctioned by the powers that be; but that I cannot consider those vows as binding, which were dictated by the profane depravity with which Mariana was lately associated. However, it is not under my roof that Mariana shall long reside."

"At least," said Mariana with a smile, "I may venture to hope my father will not send me from him in anger."

"No, of that be assured; but that sweetly mantling blush which now invades your countenance, tells me that to be sent where I would send, will not cause you deep affliction. It is to Edmund,—to him who now anxiously seeks you,—that you shall be given."

Mariana was embarrassed for an answer: virgin modesty prevented her from replying in her usual tone, but the sacred love of truth forbade her to disguise her sentiments, by affecting indifference or displeasure which she could not feel.

"She was released by the sudden entrance of Sir Geoffrey Brandon, whose joyful countenance announced that he had good news to communicate, before it was possible for his tongue to utter that which gave him pleasure.

"Trust me," cried Lord Erpingham, "I am cheered to see you thus merry, Sir Geoffrey. It would little surprise me to learn that you had some gladdening intelligence of your son-in-law and your fair daughter, now so happily my niece, as was originally intended, ere we had knowledge of those troubles which were to disturb us in our later years."

"Is it not that, my lord, which has planted smiles on my cheek, though I hope, aided by your lordship, it shall not be long ere we discover them, and bring them merrily back to England; but what I have now to tell is, that the King has been pleased to speak most kindly of you."

"Indeed!"

"And, not satisfied with the grace he has already shown, he declared to me that he would henceforth be ever more your singular good lord, and even now would fain have speech of you at Whitehall."

"This pleasures me much, and I shall obey the welcome summons straight."

"His Highness, being apprised of your recent happening on your children, would also fain have them conducted to his presence."

It was with indescribable satisfaction that Lord Erpingham repaired to Whitehall, in consequence of this intimation. His Majesty, on the arrival of the peer, was in the grounds belonging to the palace, amusing himself with shooting at a mark. The moment it was made known to him that Lord Erpingham attended, he being then in the act of taking aim, suddenly disengaged his arrow, gave it, with the weapon

from which it was to have sped, to his yeoman of the bows, and, with a smiling countenance, turned to meet the nobleman so lately the object of unjust resentment and capricious mercy.

But at that instant he was met, with an air of anxiety and surprise, by a nobleman, who, presenting the King with a dispatch already open, entreated him to bestow his immediate attention on certain sentences, which he indicated with his finger. The King read the passages to which his attention was directed; his lips quivered, his face turned pale, and a moment afterwards, a flush of rage overspread his cheek, and no vestige of the urbanity which had lately dwelt there could be traced.

"So, my lord," said he, as he entered the apartment in which Lord Erpingham, by his command, had waited his coming, "you scruple not, even now, to appear before your King."

"I, my liege, never scruple to yield prompt obedience to the lawful commands of my King."

"This sounds well, my lord; but methinks, after pardon so recently bestowed on you in your own person, you might have trembled to appear before me, at the moment when you were right well aware that others, led to it by you, are engaged in new treason against me."

"I pray your Majesty, let him who has reported this be confronted with me, that I may denounce the falsehood, as that which has nothing of truth in it ought to be denounced, even to his face."

"Silence, knave; nor think to practise cozening arts on me, pretending that you wot not your nephew, with him whom you have ever reared as your own, the sparksome Master Edmund Sherborne, have joined the rebels."

"Dread sir, speaking under your correction, this may not be. My nephew, degraded and punished for that which now appears to have been no sin against truth, is at this present (so I have worthy cause to believe), no longer in England; and, for Edmund—"

"Yea, is it so, my lord? but look to it well. You may shortly have good proof that he is in England—aye, by my holy dame, and in London too; for when taken, hither shall he be brought straight, to depart no more."

Surprised at the anger of the King, and still more at the

intelligence thus communicated, Lord Erpingham felt a degree of embarrassment to which he was little accustomed. He, however, still attempted to repel the charge preferred, and said,—

"I have ever wished, in so far as my feeble capacity enabled me, to act the part of a good and dutiful subject to your Highness. Those who regulate their conduct by my precepts will never be found to rebel against your rightful authority. Even my newly-found son has already been instructed by me, that he who fears God will not fail to honour the King, and to be prepared, should need be, to fight—nay, to die—in his good cause."

"These fair sayings are all answered in brief. Thy nephew, —thy nephew, I say, and he who has ever been educated as though he were thy son,—where are they?"

"I know not, my liege; but I will still crave leave to hope that they are not to be found in the ranks of your grace's enemies, or rebellious subjects."

"Fool!—knave!" (the King, when angry, was not choice in his expressions.) "What meanest thou? Be not these letters from the North, and mention they not that the rebels increase in insolence, being countenanced, as all surmise, by the newly liberated Lord Erpingham, whose nephew is already one of their leaders?"

"Of this I have not heard before."

"'Tis false, beast! traitor!"

"It is known full well to your Highness," Lord Erpingham replied with firmness, "that I am no beast, nor traitor; and nothing have I said that is false."

"Darest thou prate to me? Knowest thou not I can soon stop that tongue?"

"Your grace may crush me to the earth—may deprive your unworthy subject of life: but not even regal authority can despoil me of mine honour, or bend my mind to affect content when wrong is done me, and receive shame as my due."

"Why now I see rebellious rage flashing in thine eye! I looked not to repent thus early that my mercy had interposed between the axe's edge and thy life; but beware, my lord."

"I shall, my liege, I shall beware how I sin against my lawful sovereign. His mistaken ire may endanger my life,

but my honour and my conscience are in my own keeping, and not to avert the wrath which may doom me to the scaffold, would I forget the one or act against the other."

"Stand not there saucily to hold parley with your King. Be wary in your conduct, Lord Erpingham; your nephew is with the Yorkshire rebels. Remember that well, and when he comes, as perchance he quickly may, to stand in the self-same situation from which my weak pity but now snatched you; he may look for a different result, for now I swear by my Maker, and may the oath be registered in Heaven! when conviction and condemnation fall out to be his lot, from me he shall find no mercy. If his blood stream not on a scaffold, it shall not be through my interposing love for the name of Erpingham."

The King then retired, with the utmost indignation indicated in his countenance and manner. Lord Erpingham, equally surprised and afflicted at what he had heard, would fain have persuaded himself that the report was untrue, but other advices soon terminated all doubt, and satisfied him that Clifford was really with the insurgents, and that Edmund had embarked in the same cause. It would be wasting space to tell how deeply Ferdinand and Mariana were afflicted by this news. The evil unhappily was one which admitted not of remedy or mitigation, and nothing remained but to await in awful expectation the event.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I do in friendship counsel you
To leave this place, albeit you have deserved
High commendation, true applause, and love.
SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Elinor revived, the persons whose sudden appearance had overwhelmed her with alarm, were no longer in the room. She perceived that her head was sustained by some one who was occupied in bathing her temples; and the idea that it was Father Egbert who attended her suggesting itself, she started up with horror, and beheld Nicholas Bray.

Though her fear abated when she had ascertained that Egbert was not there, it was small consolation to find herself still under the observation of the jester, whom she believed the creature of her more terrible enemy.

She was greatly mistaken in the conclusion which she had drawn from the expressions used by Bray. His directions to the pursuers were given not merely to throw off suspicion from himself, but to favour the escape of the fugitives, by sending those who sought to overtake them where they were not to be found. Though subsequently prevented by the impetuosity of Elinor from explaining his purpose, he continued to watch near her with anxious care, and to labour for her preservation. He overheard the language held by Egbert, and took care to call others to the spot, to whom he represented that they were all betrayed by the very man who had been one of the principal instigators of the rebellion, and that to obtain Clifford's wife he had not scrupled to favour the flight of two of the individuals, who were to be given up to buy pardon for the pilgrims generally.

And it was in the moment, when Egbert, falsely pretending that he desired to save Clifford, claimed on that ground the favourable regards of Elinor, that Aske, through the efforts of Bray, was made one of the listeners. He was not slow in deciding what ought to be done, and in a few minutes the chamber was forced in the manner before described, and Egbert himself made a prisoner.

Bray was highly rejoiced when he saw Elinor again unclose her eyes.

"Never be afraid, young lady," said he, "all may yet be well."

Elinor made no reply, but her looks sufficiently intimated the disgust with which she regarded the jester.

"Now I see," said he, "you are still angry with me. You give me just the same frown which I got at Canterbury; then I might deserve it, but trust me I do not now."

"Leave me, leave me," said Elinor, "I have no thought, no speech for a wretch of thy calling."

"Marry, at present I am a wretch of no calling," the jester replied, "but I would in all cases be your very poor friend."

"Talk not of friendship, man."

"Though your words be few, lady, your tone is not a little severe. But at that I need not marvel, for you suppose me to have endeavoured to detain Clifford. This is not so, but all the contrary; and now, hoping that he is in safety, I would fain offer my poor services to conduct you to him."

"What new cruelty would you devise?"

"None, lady, and up to this hour believe me I have practised none; unless, indeed, it be against Father Egbert; who, through my doings, is at this present in straight confinement."

"Cease thy glozing. I know thy levity, in other days, could make sport of things little fitted for jest, and question not, that now thou art but preparing to mock distress."

"I may not deny, that my irreverent mirth has sometimes run riot at that from which it ought to have fled. But, lady, there is at least one object in creation, which not even the mad wit of a fool could profane with derision—a weeping woman."

Elinor looked on the jester with some surprise. The tone of animated benevolence in which he spoke, was so unlike his usual rambling strain, that it commanded attention, and she doubted whether she had not wronged him.

"Thy manner is different from what it was wont to be," she said, "what may I think of thee?"

"At least think that I can feel for a woman in distress, and for a wife and mother, bereft by calamity of the protector to whom I would fain restore them."

"Is this the language of sincerity?"

"Doubt it not. Let the absence of your enemy, removed by my means, and now exposed to that very peril to which he sought to give Clifford, pass for one voucher. That your husband has not yet been made prisoner may serve for another; as it will show you, that seeming to direct the pursuit, I taught his enemies to do any thing but follow him."

"I fear me I have wronged thee, jester."

"Now you glad my heart. Let us hasten from this dismal neighbourhood. I will be your guide to York. Since it is thus, I shall be so joyous, that my song and jest shall enliven all the way."

"These shall not be needed."

"But they cannot be restrained; come, we will laugh, and we will be happy. By the way, I hope Master Clifford will not be jealous."

"Jealous, friend! Of what."

"O, if you cannot tell of what, I say no more. But methinks your query is something like a personal reflection: I only meant to hint my desire, that he might not take it amiss that you journey with me, and amuse himself by cropping my listeners, that I may not always have the same advantage over him that I have now."

"Have done with this idling."

"I cannot stop my tongue while I am so happy as to possess your confidence. Come, I will lift your baby. Why, look at the little rogue, he laughs at me, while a tear, produced by your late alarm, rests just below his eye. How motionless it stands! Sorrow and care have as yet produced no furrow by which it may pass, and so there it lingers on his damask cheek unable to get away."

"Now let us forward."

"I am ready to attend you," cried Bray.

"Come, my young sir, you must with me. See how he keeps laughing. Marry, he makes me vain, for methinks I must even yet be worth something as a fool, since I can make this youngster so merry. Why, what do you give me that buffet for, you saucy young dog, with your little fat paw? If you go on boxing my ears at this rate, you will serve me for a flapper. But come, lady, forgive my prating, and now let us take the road to York."

They quitted the house together, and left Doncaster without molestation or inquiry. Elinor followed the jester, who continued talking incessantly to the child, encouraging his playfulness and affecting to reprove it.

Two hours had elapsed after this departure, when they started at hearing the trampling of horses behind them. Bray suggested the propriety of concealment, and a small mound enabled them to escape notice.

"Verily," cried one of the passing horsemen, "it is no wise thing to send us far to night on this chase, which, after all, may end in nothing."

"If," said his companion, "the tale be true, which holy father Colt's Tooth thought it right to tell, they

will have passed Ferry-bridge, ere we can come up with them."

"Be that as it may, beyond Ferry-bridge I will not budge ere morning."

"Nay, nor will I."

"Nor I—nor I," repeated the others of the party, as they rode by at a pace which soon carried them beyond all chance of being overheard by Elinor and the jester.

"Those fellows," cried Bray, "are sent to find Clifford and his companion. They proceed to York."

"I would fain hope not."

"I fear me it is past hope, or even doubt."

"Indeed! how can it be known that they have fled to York, unless indeed—you—unless you—"

"Unless I have told! They are safe from me, lady; but you unluckily named it to Father Egbert."

"Alas! and so I did."

"It cannot now be helped. But do not seem so sad. Clifford will not be the first man who has suffered for his wife's tongue. We must do our best to save him, by getting to York before these varlets."

"There is little prospect of that. Though I cannot feel weariness in such a cause, yet no speed that will be possible for me to exert, will enable us to distance their horses."

"That is very true; so as we cannot go faster than they, what we have to do is, to make them slacken their pace."

"But it cannot be done."

"We shall see that when we get to Ferry-bridge, where we must join company with them?"

"How say you, must we join company with them?"

"Yea, so please you. I know you like not such mean society, but as you could endure it at Canterbury, I would hope you can submit to it now, for a short hour or so."

"At Canterbury, my husband was with me."

"And that your husband may be again with you, which I fear he never will if you indulge over delicate scruples, I pray you to bear with the presence of these fellows awhile."

"I consent, but what can that avail?"

"Time will show. I would further have you stoop to the abasement of becoming Mistress Bray."

"What mean you?"

"Only for a short time. No offence to you, a wife is one of those treasures of which I would never rob a man; but at present if you should be known as the partner of Clifford, it will nothing serve your husband or yourself; therefore I would have you appear as mine. Could I strike a light, I would paint you."

"And why should I be painted?"

"Not to improve, but to hide beauty. To prevent your being recognised by any one who might know you, and to make you pass for a she jester. You see I have got what remains of my fool wardrobe on. This I wear because in travelling it secures me some favour; and you, as my spouse, shall not be dealt with harshly."

"I know not how to act."

"Never fear. But the moon shines bright, and now I can see to paint you. Oh! this is a good omen! I was only wishing for a tinder-box, and kind Luna offers me a ready lighted candle."

Bray lost no time in altering the appearance of Elinor, so that her look was almost as grotesque as he had taken care to make his own.

"And now," said he, "I pray you be prepared to pardon some license of speech, since it is needful that you should pass for the wife of a fool. See, we are already near Ferry-bridge."

"And must we mingle with those who seek my husband's life?

"I can devise no means of saving that life without doing so. Come, be of good cheer, and I trust we shall soon resume our journey with lighter hearts and better prospects."

"Who goes there?" demanded one who stood at the door of an inn, or alehouse, as they entered Ferry-bridge.

"Who goes there?" repeated Bray, mimicking the gruffness of the person who had accosted him; "why those who would fain come here: and since the host cannot have been mad enough to go to bed leaving his door open and you so near it, if you will waddle your limbs to the right or to the left, so that your betters may find passage way, you will see *who goes there*."

"You are a pert varlet, and use too many words."

"It comes from the foolish benevolence of my nature,

which still prompts me to enlighten the ignorant, and waste wit on those who are too dull to relish it."

"You may spare it here."

"Well, I am sparing it; for to spare is to dispense it, which I do in the affluence of my humour, still throwing pearls before swine, though acorns might do as well."

"But take heed how you throw your gibing acorns this way, or you may hap to get a taste of an oaken stick for your pains."

"That is good—good for one who is bad. But a jest from your surly mouth contrasts oddly with your bear-like carriage. Still to have produced it is something. A skilful gardener need not blush for producing an autumn sprout from an old stump of a summer cabbage; so now that I have given you your way, do you give me mine, by standing out of it, that I may pass.—Come Bridget."

"Heyday! what have we here?" cried the man, who now perceived the representation of two long ears in the bonnet which the jester wore.

"A poor fool," cried Bray, "so let us not jostle one another."

"And what would you? Did you think you were coming to the *feast of the Ass?*"

"No, I was afraid I should be too late to sup with you."

"And who is it follows? Have you got a wife?"

"To be sure; most fools have."

"I marvel, seeing those of thy calling are so illy paid, that thou shouldst get a wife."

"It was because I was so illy paid that I married. Alone I could not eat, so I thought it a saving to marry, as twenty can starve on less than one. Come along, Bridget," he continued, addressing himself to Elinor; "we have good fortune on our side, to find a house open for suppering, or rather afternooning, for I have had nothing since my dinner; so come in."

While he spoke, he pushed by the man who had first challenged him, and conducted Elinor into a room where the pilgrims, by whom they had been passed on the road, were regaling.

"Well met, my gallants," cried the jester, "your worships make merry. None of you shall rise, I insist, for me

or for my family; so though you may see by my dress that you have got a fool among you, consider me but your equal."

"Why, master Jester," cried the man he had encountered at the door, "this is none of your family. That boy in nothing favours thee."

"Beauty, Master Gruffpipe, is not hereditary," returned Bray; "if it be, supposing thy father to have looked like a handsome man, thou hast been shamefully cheated of all thine inheritance."

"Whence come you?"

"From Lincoln, so please you, which, you know, is a marvellously fair city; and I have found rare sport on the road from it."

"What sport, master fool?"

"You shall know that I fell in with a dame indifferently gay in her apparel, who demanded, just to show off her grand airs and costly notions, if Bridget would sell her a pin to fix a stomacher."

"You mean a skewer."

"I mean not a skewer, nor did she mean a skewer. Let thine ignorance be informed, that Queen Catherine, whose head is now about to be severed as Queen Ann's was formerly, has been used to deck herself with small pins, made of brass and copper (the invention is new), in place of skewers."

"I remember to have heard it."

"So did the dame I mentioned; and she having made show of her knowledge of court finery, entreated me to inform her of the best, meaning thereby the shortest road, to Lincoln."

"And where was the sport in all that? Thou art a dull fool."

"If my wit run as low as thy sense, this may be said with truth. A foundation must be laid for a house, and so there must for a story;—a child must be nursed before it can run alone, and so must a jest. Now listen. The buxom one I saw, being in converse with me, never scrupled to own that she was wife to one who by a late pact was to be given up to the King. His name, she said, was Clifford."

"Clifford!" repeated several voices; "which road was she journeying?"

"Why, the Lincoln road, as I have already told; and thereat she laughed, and demanded if we had seen her husband?"

"And had you?"

"We had, with another whose life, as I since learn, was in the same predicament; and it seems these had been sent on, while she, pretending to be frighted and surprised by an amorous old monk, had let out, as if by chance, that they fled to York."

"Was that but a trick?"

"I am now coming to the jest. Oh! if you had but heard her laugh at the hurry in which she had got certain honest doddypates sent off towards York, to arrest those who never thought of going there, you had not soon forgotten it. Then to hear her describe the fume in which the muddy-brained blocks would arrive, and the sheepish looks with which they should return empty handed, you had not shut that yawning gulf, which I suppose you call a mouth, for a week."

"Perchance her mirth will soon be stopped."

"How shall that be, seeing those who go to York cannot catch the runaways who make for Lincoln?"

"But we can pass thither at once, for we are those whom she has deceived."

"Say you so? O, then I shall claim share of the reward which will be gained when the fugitives be taken. This will be rare, will it not, Bridget? Take ale, wench; drain the cup: for with such a supply in prospect, we need not fear charges."

The party to whom Bray had addressed himself, now took it into serious consideration, whether they should continue their journey towards York, or take the road which the jester had described the Cliffords to have travelled. They decided for the latter: but determined on leaving one of their party behind to watch the motions of Bray, whom they enjoined to wait their return; at the same time threatening vengeance if it should appear that he had deceived them.

Elinor was alarmed at the idea of being detained; but Bray was not at all disconcerted. Pretending to exult in the anticipated capture of Clifford and Edmund, he pledged the whole party in repeated draughts of ale, taking care to drink but sparingly himself. While they were thus engaged,

he suggested to Elinor that she might set forward with the child, and calculate on his overtaking her. She acted on this recommendation without delay. Shortly after day-break those who had been ordered to York took the road to Lincoln, with the exception of one man, who was left to look after the jester. Bray had managed to ply him well with liquor, and he found little difficulty in prevailing on him to follow the others. He said they could both ride on the same horse, so that the pilgrim must always be secure of his companion.

In this manner they set forward. They had scarcely travelled a mile, when a little brook by the road-side met their view.

"See you not how transparent that stream is?" inquired the jestr.

"I note it," replied the pilgrim, "and it makes me thirst."

"Down and drink; I will hold the reins for thee," cried Bray; at the same time taking them from the hand of the other, who was almost helpless from intoxication.

"I would do it, but I cannot get off easily."

"Never fear, man. It is not difficult to get down in the world. Withdraw thy foot from the stirrup. So—that is well."

"I can do it but slowly."

"I'll aid thee to do it quicker.—There, you are now down," said Bray, and he precipitated his companion into the water.

"Hallo!" roared the pilgrim; "help! mean you to drown me."

"O no, quite the contrary," said the jester, turning the horse round, "I am going back to the inn, to buy a child's caul, which the landlord has for sale, to save thee from a watery death."

He clapped spurs to the horse, retraced his steps, and soon rejoined Elinor, whom he lifted with the child into the saddle; and proceeding with greater expedition than before, they arrived in safety at York.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

From one dread moment, shuddering fell
From mental joy's frail eminence,
To that abyss of woe intense.

GRATTAN.

IT was in the street leading to the Minster, called the Stone-gate, that Elinor rejoined her husband and his friend. That joy was felt at their meeting,—that this was speedily succeeded by doubts and anxieties, consultations and debate,—the reader will easily imagine; and on those it is therefore unnecessary to dilate. To state the result will be sufficient.

It was calculated that the pursuers, baulked in their expectations, would speedily return from Lincoln to seek their original place of destination, and therefore they concluded that no safety could be hoped for in York. The next thing was to determine to what place they should remove. Edmund inclined to the belief that it might be wise to get to the coast; but it was finally resolved, as flight by sea would be one of the first things that would occur to their enemies, it was extremely probable that agents, who could recognise them, had already been dispatched to the nearest sea-ports.

Without coming to a final conclusion, as to what particular place they should seek, they left York singly, in the direction opposite to that in which they calculated their pursuers might be found. For several days they passed from place to place in the same way, avoiding being seen together; but never being long without communicating with each other. At length, at the suggestion of the jester, they shaped their course to Sutton-in-Ashfield, where, he said, he had a cousin, whose house would be at their command. Here they found the shelter of which they stood in need; and from this place Bray undertook to journey to London, in order to communicate with Lord Erpingham.

He succeeded in what he had engaged to perform, reached Fickett's Fields, and saw the peer. It was his lordship's opinion, that Clifford and Edmund ought not to remain in any place at which they had arrived, at the time when active search was making for them, and he therefore recom

mended that they should remove to Nottingham. At the outskirts of the town, by his means two cottages were procured for their reception, of which they soon proceeded to take possession. They were humble, as it was deemed prudent to avoid every thing that might indicate the possession of more than would suffice to furnish the common necessaries of life.

The habitation of Clifford was at the foot, or but a little above the foot of a chalky hill. A roof had been constructed over a hollow scooped in the hill, which was fronted with chalk, in which a door and casements had been inserted. It was mean in appearance, but as the very humility of its aspect was their security, he and Elinor felt no disposition to repine on that account.

Often did they enjoy a walk by the side of the Trent, shortly after the morning had dawned. They even scrupled not to invade the forest, though at the risk of being challenged by the *Verderors*, who were strictly charged to restrain persons disposed to leave the highways, from an apprehension that they might intend injury to the game. But the very early hour at which Clifford, his wife, and his friend ventured on these trespasses, exposed them to small chance of being subjected to the penalties, which might have been pronounced against such offenders, by the court of *Swainemote*, before which, if taken, they must have appeared.

"Those hands were not made for such offices as they now perform," Clifford one day remarked, when he saw Elinor engaged in preparing the principal repast of the day.

"That tongue, Clifford, was not fashioned to utter such solemn and complaining sounds," she replied. "While you are safe from persecution, and relieved from the moral degradation, which once pursued your name, I am happy. The winged carolers, our neighbours, are clamorous in their joy for the commodious shelter this hill affords them, and so could I be, when you forget to grieve. I enjoy, with highest relish, the very peculiarities of my situation, which you regard as painful; and if I can administer to the comfort of my mate, I would scarcely deign to exchange this our nest for a palace."

Months rolled over, and observation was successfully eluded. Edmund resided in a cottage near that of Clifford,

and Bray acted as servant or half companion for both. Sometimes they left their homes early in the morning, and passed the day in the romantic and retired scenes in that vicinity till after nightfall, when the friends repaired to each other's abode, and spent their evenings together.

Both Edmund and Clifford felt often tempted to pass beyond the seas. Edmund was not without hope that Mariana would rejoin him in another country, and become indissolubly his. But to this plan Lord Erpingham opposed himself, and, cherishing the expectation that the King would one day relent, he conjured them not to risk their own lives, and his peace, by making any such movement at present.

To them it appeared far from probable, that the King would ever pardon. Since their abode at Nottingham, a new insurrection had broken out, in which some who had fomerly called themselves pilgrims were concerned. They had been prosecuted with the utmost severity; and Aske, after being received into favour at court, had, with several others, suffered death. Lord Erpingham, however, did not despair, and confident in the precautions which he had taken for communicating with them, never ceased to press upon them the importance of remaining some time longer at Nottingham.

Yielding to these suggestions, they gave up the idea of leaving England. Amply provided with the means of procuring every comfort, in which they judged it safe to indulge, they began to multiply expedients for making time pass unperceived; and the apprehensions which formerly were never absent from their minds, wore off by degrees, till they almost wholly forgot their recent alarms.

One evening, a man who was coming towards Nottingham from York was stopped by robbers. Having taken, as they believed, all that he possessed of value, they were leaving him, when the man thus despoiled entreated that a pair of velvet shoes, of which he was the bearer, might be returned to him. This was refused: he saw them departing; and anxious to make one more effort, be offered to give them three angels, which they had overlooked, for that pair of shoes. The strangeness of this request surprised the robbers, and seizing the man, they soon obtained the money which had before escaped their search. They now paid

particular attention to the shoes, but could perceive nothing so costly in their make as would account for the enormous price the bearer had been willing to pay for their ransom. Struck with the mysterious character of the incident, they judged there must be something extraordinary connected with the shoes, and it was suggested by one, that probably articles of value were sewed up in them. On this presumption they cut them to pieces, and between the soles of one of them found a letter from Lord Erpingham to his nephew. The fellow who discovered it was able to read; he perceived that the paper which had fallen into his hands enabled him to serve the state and himself at the same time, by giving up Edmund and Clifford; and taking the reward which had been offered for their apprehension.

Edmund was on that night at Clifford's cottage; the friends were conversing, when the well-know rap of Nick Bray was heard, and immediately after, the jester entered.

"Joy, joy!" he cried. "We shall now be happy and merry the longest day we have to live."

"What has chanced?" demanded Clifford.

"What has chanced!—why, good fortune, so long a stranger to you and yours, has chanced; and Lord Erpingham sends word that you have nothing to do but to beg the King's forgiveness, and be restored to your friends."

"Can this be so?"

"Oh, you may be assured that it is true; one came to the door of the cottage, where I was keeping the fire company, and entreated to have speech of Master Edmund. 'Marry, for what?' said I; so then he up and told me. 'Tarry a saason,' said I; 'you catch not an old bird with chaff;' whereupon he made me know that he had brought letters from Lord Erpingham. 'Is it even so?' quoth I; 'and how doth he send them?' 'O,' replied he, 'in the old way which is now no longer a secret.' 'And what may be that same old way?' questioned I. Then he replied, 'That it was by hiding them between the two soles of a shoe, of which he sent a pair;' whereby I knew that he could be no cheat, and so have brought him hither."

While the jester was speaking, a stranger entered.

"What has been told is the truth," he said. "You have but to ask forgiveness, and the past is forgotten. The mayor is now in waiting to receive your submission, and to

administer anew the oath of allegiance, and you shall thenceforth be freed from all peril."

"And must he to the mayor?" demanded Elinor, startled at the sound.

"That is needful," the stranger replied, "as you will find it set forth in the letter sent by Lord Erpingham, which, doubtless, you have by this received in the manner he was wont to correspond with you, while yet there was danger of discovery."

"I have received no letter," said Clifford.

"Then the fellow has loitered."

"He is here!" exclaimed Clifford, and at that moment the messenger made his appearance.

The person who had accompanied Bray looked round, and the messenger, on seeing him, instantly fled.

"Be not alarmed, man," cried Edmund, "all here are friends."

The messenger did not hear, or hearing did not judge it prudent to return.

"He deems the ancient caution necessary," Clifford remarked; "but come, sir, enough has been said to convince me, and now we are ready to obey the welcome summons."

They left the cottage, but had proceeded but a few steps, when each was attached in the King's name as a traitor. The friends were in no condition to make resistance. Their hands were quickly secured, and they were forthwith conveyed to the county jail.

The calamity was one which could not be concealed. Elinor was informed of that which she most dreaded to know. Bray, almost frantic, declared that he had never sustained such distress since the day when his master the Cardinal made a present of him to the King, when his woe was so great, that, according to Cavendish, "while on the way to court, he lamented like a tyrant," and being there, was so melancholy, that he was soon dismissed, as wholly unfit to cheer those who had an opportunity of enjoying the pungent humour and brilliant waggeries of Will Somers.

With aching heart, still attended by the jester, Elinor followed her husband and his friend and brother in misfortune, to London. Arrived in the metropolis, though her

father and Lord Erpingham united their best efforts in the cause of the accused, Elinor doubted not that sentence would pass against them. It was not long before her fears were confirmed. Subservient judges and timid juries were not then hard to find; and certainly a case was made out against the prisoners, which might have produced a verdict of guilty in happier times, and such as at that moment left little grounds for supposing that the sentence would not be carried into execution.

Bray felt this. His mirth was no more: but he still laboured to sustain the sinking spirits of Elinor.

"Never despair, lady," said he; "though the day be cloudy, the sun may yet shine; and there is hope for the oyster till the shell be in twain."

"Alas!" she exclaimed, when he thus attempted to soothe her. "I fear there is no reasonable hope for Clifford."

"Nay, lady, after what you have already seen, it is not meet that you should despair. But I have witnessed more, and shall still look for better things, even though the death-day were fixed. Why, it is only some two or three years past, that Sir Edmund Knevet, being sentenced to lose his right hand for striking a blow within the King's house, in the Tennis-court, was brought for execution."

"This cannot affect me."

"Methinks it may. Many high and illustrious characters were assembled on this occasion. First among them stood *I*, in quality of spectator; then forth came the chirugeon, with his instruments; followed, the *serjeant of the woodyard*, with a mallet, and the block on which the hand should lie. Who should come next but the King's cook, his white cap on his head, with the knife which was to cut off the hand. The *serjeant of the larder* was with him, to set the knife right on the joint. After this, behold the *serjeant farrier*, with hot irons, to sear the veins."

"No more of this."

"Nay, hear; for it shall comfort you. The *serjeant of the poultry* appeared, with a live cock, whose head was to be struck off on the aforesaid block. The *yeoman of the chandry* brought sear-cloths; the *yeoman of the scullery* came with fire, to keep the irons hot; the *serjeant of the cellar* attended with ale and wine; and the *yeoman of the ewry* brought basin and towels. All being ready, Sir Edmund took off his ruff,

and offered to submit his hand to the knife and mallet; and laid laid it on the block, as it might be here. The knife and mallet were taken from off the form, which might stand as it were there; when news came, that forasmuch as he had petitioned to lose his left hand, that with his right he might still serve the King; therefore he should go free. Upon this poor cock-a-doodle crowed; but small cause had he so to do, for his head was presently chopped off, to show how it might have fared with Sir Emdund's hand, and, moreover, to furnish a relish with the ale and wine, which were presently so I said, *made a hand of*, in place of that which the knight, should have lost. Now, after this, lady, who shall say that there is no hope for your husband, although he be condemned, as many have been before, and who are now well to live in the land."

CHAPTER XLIX.

O yet confirm my heart, ye powers above,
This last tremendous shock of fate to prove.
FALCONER.

Most unremitting were the efforts made in behalf of Clifford and Edmund; but though sometimes flattered with momentary hope, their friends had little reason to congratulate themselves. The name of Clifford could not be mentioned to the King without calling forth his indignation; and he unceasingly reminded such as were disposed to speak in behalf of Lord Erpingham's nephew, of the oath he had made never to shew mercy to one of that family.

Considering themselves devoted to death, both prepared to meet the inevitable doom with firmness. Clifford indulged the belief that greater would be shewn towards Edmund than he could expect for himself, as it had been proved by witnesses on the trial, as well as by the admission which he himself had made, that he did not join the rebels till urged to do so by the example and earnest entreaties of Clifford. But this hope grew every day more and more faint, till he almost ceased to cherish it at all.

Clifford calculated that the execution would take place in the course of three or four days, when one night he was visited by Sir William Kingston, the Lieutenant of the Tower. It was after ten o'clock, and on that account he apologised as he entered, for breaking upon the prisoner's meditations at so late an hour.

"Heed not that," said Clifford; "society is solace; and you need not fear marring my rest, as it cannot much endanger the constitution of a man who has but a few days to live."

"You do well, Master Clifford," returned the lieutenant, "to turn your thoughts that way; in sooth, to give them such direction was now the object of my coming hither. Life is uncertain; we know not how soon our breath may be stopped; and seeing in the course of nature we cannot at the most remain very long, it is right needful that we should evermore hold ourselves ready, as it is my hope you do hold yourself, to depart, even almost at a minute's warning."

"This is sagely urged, and may not be forgotten."

"Truly, sir, it were pity that it should be; for sad indeed were your case, if, calculating on lengthened life, you should suddenly be astounded, like him of whom we read in the Gospel, by the awful tidings, 'This night thy soul shall be demanded of thee.'"

"I am much beholden to your kind intentions; but tell me, good Sir William Kingston, whereto this wholesome discourse is designed to lead. Hugely am I mistaken, if it is your wont thus to admonish all prisoners being under sentence of death, but not yet appointed to die."

"Ah me!" replied the lieutenant, with an air of deep affliction; "sad is the task which I have now to perform. Trust me, my heart is full of bitterness while I announce that mercy on earth is not for you. The King has rejected the suit of those who interceded on your behalf."

"This, sir, is no more than I expected."

"And, further, sir, you are to know that—that—"

Here he paused, and, much affected, took Clifford by the hand, who encouraged him to proceed—

"I have," said the lieutenant, "within the last hour, received the warrant for your execution."

"Indeed!"

"It is here for your perusal. Behold the fatal *stamp*."

"The stamp! I know not of what you speak."

"The King, sir, by reason that he is much in years, and often but ill at his ease, cannot now sustain the fatigue of writing as heretofore, wherefore his signature has been engraved, and is now, by means of a stamp, conveyed to such instruments as he would sign. Would to Heaven it had been wanting here!"

"I thank you, sir, for this kind feeling towards me. When is the day on which I am to suffer?"

"It is even that on the threshold of which we now stand, and which, when little more than another hour has passed, shall be here."

"I must die then to-morrow. And by what hour must I depart?"

"You may not live beyond nine of the clock."

"There is no help, Sir William! but it comes rather suddenly."

"It is even so, but I have lost no time in seeing you, more than I could avoid; but it unfortunately chanced, that not looking for this order so speedily, the draper has not sent the black cloth which was ordered to cover the scaffold. To him was I obliged to send late as it was, to bid him forward a supply by an early hour in the morning. This, and directing the joiner to call his people together to erect the scaffold, which must be on the hill, delayed my coming, but trust me not much."

"No blame, sir, can attach to you. Procure me a messenger, who shall hie to Lord Erpingham."

"That has already been done. He who has been sent to the draper, was charged to go on to Fickett's Fields, to beg of Lord Erpingham that he would straight attend here with those whom he has under his roof, whom I judged you and your fellow-sufferer might covet to behold once more."

"Then my wife is already informed that I am to die so soon."

"No, I but said that you forthwith desired to speak with her; to the end that you might impart the news more gently."

"This is well; I pray you, sir, let it not escape you when they arrive. It will somewhat abate the bitterness of our

separation. Therefore I entreat you whisper all the truth into the ear of Lord Erpingham, but keep it from the females who shall be with him, if this may be."

"I will sadly but willingly obey, and the more so as the self-same request has but now been made to me from your friend."

"He then is not to be spared?"

"He is not, and besides him the monk Father Egbert, who was largely concerned in the pilgrimage, must lay down his life at the same time."

"Indeed! There at least justice shall be done."

"Hark!—I hear the trampling of horses. It is Lord Erpingham, and those we expect with him—I will down to receive them."

Clifford waited with much anxiety for the moment which should admit Elinor. He was embarrassed for an excuse to account for desiring to see her that night, without revealing the news which he had just received. Hesitating as to the course he should adopt, he heard the door unlock, and still undetermined, saw Elinor rush to his arms.

"I desired much to see you," said Elinor, "but wish not to interrupt your repose to-night, though I might perchance have ventured if I had had hope of being admitted, for I have grateful tidings to impart. But what have you to tell? Have you been cheered with a prospect of mercy?"

"I am not without hope, that mercy the most ample and complete that any earthly offender could desire, will yet be extended to me."

"And I," said Elinor, "was promised this afternoon by the Lord Chancellor, that he would use his best offices with the King, and that I should know the result (he trusted that it would be favourable) by to-morrow noon."

"Your active love has done much. But methinks you need take no further trouble on my account; since you cannot obtain answer till to-morrow noon."

"Think you that so long, Clifford?"

"Too long to make it worth while for you to do more."

"You speak of it as if it were a year distant.—Reflect, it is but a few hours that we have to wait."

"True; it is but a few hours that *you* have to wait."

"And much I fear that you have no chance of gaining release from any other quarter before that hour."

"The King can throw open the doors of my prison before that time, should he think fit to do so."

"Oh, now I see it. You have received some kind assurance."

"It may be that kindness will soon be shown to me."

"And shall you leave the Tower to-morrow?"

"Leave the Tower!—I did not say—yes—I expect so."

"This is joy indeed. It was therefore that you sent for me. That generous heart could not repose in solitary happiness."

Clifford had gone beyond what he intended to do. He wished to throw a veil over the horrors which the morning must disclose, but it was not his object to kindle that lively and expectant hope which now throbbed in the bosom and glowed on the countenance of the fond, faithful Elinor. He applied himself to repair this error.

"Beware, Elinor, of indulging a delusive dream, which first presenting imaginary bliss, may then vanish to wake thee to wretchedness and horror."

"Nay, Clifford, never chide the honest joy which glistens through tears of rapture, when I have the satisfaction to learn that you, who so lately believed mercy from the crown could not be looked for, are now expecting an immediate release."

"But we must be prepared for the worst. We have experienced enough of vicissitude to know that the most tremendous shocks are often preparing when danger seems to retire, and anxiety is no more. Did you bring your child with you?"

"Not at this late hour. I thought you would not desire it. The night air might harm him."

"It might. Yet I could have wished to see him. Did you leave him sleeping?"

"I did."

"I would I had seen him."

"You shall see him in the morning: I will bring him to you, by nine of the clock."

"By nine!" Clifford sadly exclaimed.

"By nine he shall be here: I will come to the minute."

"No—no—not then, Elinor! I shall be busy at that hour. But go to him to night. Kiss him as he sleeps, and say for me, even as the clock strikes one, for I shall then be waking, —'Thy father blesses thee.'"

"This I will do. But shall I bring him to you after nine? Shall I come at ten o'clock, or shall I defer it till I have been to the Lord Chancellor at twelve?"

"You need not come before."

"After twelve then I shall bring him."

"It boots not, I shall not wish to see him then—*here* I mean."

"Before that hour, perhaps, you may be enabled to see him elsewhere."

"It may be, Elinor, that I shall behold—But let us not flatter ourselves: I would fain hold myself always ready to die, and be you prepared for whatever may chance."

"So you are spared, Clifford, I fear nothing that can arrive. Should you die, methinks my woe will be brief, for I must perish with you."

"Oh no! Should I fall beneath the headsman's stroke, it will then become your duty not to yield to sensibility and sorrow; but rather to put forth the courage and the firmness which marked your conduct in other days. This I would press as of all duties the most imperative, the most sacred. Let not weak regret for me, rob my child of the parent whom tyranny may spare. Let him not go forth alone, to learn from a calumnious world that his father was a traitor; but if I have ever been dear, live to tell him my unhappy story; that he may not join the unfeeling throng who pass my grave with scorn, or point to my parched quarters, with reckless derision."

"But why—why at this hour does your mind revert to such images?—why, when such cheering prospects—"

"Nay, Elinor, I—I speak of what may be.—But I would not longer detain you from repose: go—farewell."

"Farewell," cried Elinor, embracing him—"Farewell—but for only one night."

"Only one night!" Clifford repeated.

Elinor was about to leave the apartment, when he called to her.

"Stay—stay a moment. Elinor, you have been faithful to—"

He faltered. "To the end," he was about to say, but he checked himself.

"What would you say?" Elinor inquired, not a little surprised at his manner.

"But this, that you have been ever constant—ever kind. I have sometimes spoken harshly. Do you forgive me?"

"How unkind to ask it! Do you think I treasure up resentment against my husband? I have seen thee sad, and thy tongue has said what thou wouldst not have had it say. But thy heart has pursued and chastised it for disobedience, and then it has given voice to what I do remember—indulgent tenderness and words of ardent love."

"Then I am forgiven.—One more embrace, my Elinor. Now to thy boy, and remember what I told thee."

"And kiss him for his father?"

"And bless him, Elinor. At one, even while the bell strikes, my lips shall breathe the blessing I would have thee utter for me."

At this moment Lord Erpingham entered. Clifford made a sign for him not to speak. They exchanged a few words in whispers. Elinor, with Mariana, who had just quitted Edmund, remained near the door. Both Lord Erpingham and Clifford desired that their interview, under such circumstances, should not be protracted, and with brief, but ambiguous expressions of affection and sorrow, they parted.

CHAPTER LI.

Such torments, in the drear abodes of hell,
Where sad despair laments with rueful yell,—
Such torments, agonise the damned breast.

FALCONER.

"THEY have left the fortress," said the lieutenant, who presented himself a few minutes after the departure of Lord Erpingham.

"I hope," said Clifford, "Elinor and Lord Erpingham's daughter received no intimation of what is to take place."

"None. As they went forth, the straw which had been brought out in readiness to be carried to the scaffold obtructed the way, and the lady your consort inquired wherefore such a quantity should be there. The fellow who had it in charge was on the point of explaining that it was to be

laid over the sawdust, when I cut all short, by saying we required straw for more purposes than one in the Tower, and so no more was heard."

"You did well."

"A confessor is in attendance: will you be shrived forthwith?"

"I would rather be an hour or two alone to compose myself; but the moment it is light, let him come to me."

The lieutenant retired, and Clifford gave himself up to solemn meditation. His mind was so occupied that he heeded not how the time sped, till the hour of one sounded in his ear.

"Thy father blesses thee!" he exclaimed. "These words are now murmured by the fond mother over her sleeping charge. Elinor still cherishes delusive hope, nor dreams it is a dying blessing of which she is the bearer. Thy father blesses thee, my child, and reconciled to death for himself, still sheds for thee a tear, from eyes which weep because they may gaze on thee no more."

He resumed his seat, which he had left as the clock struck, and reclining on his elbow for a few moments, closed his eyes. But the repose in which he was inclined to indulge, came not at his call; he found himself incapable of sleep, and abandoning all thought of rest, he occupied himself in writing to Elinor.

The confessor came at the time Clifford had desired to see him, and attending to him, Clifford endeavoured to give all his thoughts to his immortal concerns.

The Tower now presented that scene of silent activity which those who have ever witnessed the preparations for an execution, and who have not witnessed them so often as to become familiar with the spectacle, must own replete with awful interest. The gradual assembling of those who had to take a part in the solemn business of the day; the directions given to individuals to be in readiness at particular points; the exhortations to guard against indecorous hurry, and inconvenient pressure; the brief repelling answers called forth from those who had access to the sufferers, by the inquiries of individuals who had obtained admittance but to gratify curiosity; and the information sparingly dispensed by some of the officers, who were not proof against solicitation, caused a low murmur to run through the for-

tress, which, though never still, indicated an acknowledgment from all present, that silence best befitted the occasion.

It was past seven o'clock when Clifford was led from his apartment to a room in which he was to be joined by his fellow-sufferers. Edmund had previously been conducted to it. Eager to see each other, and gratified to converse once more, though but for a few moments, and under all the appaling circumstances of impending death, they bounded forward, and each clasped to his bosom the form of his friend.

"This scene is near its close," said Edmund; "how does it affect you."

"Much less than I once expected," Clifford replied; "and I feel as if, others being unthought of, parting from life would to me be as easy as throwing off my doublet."

"My feelings are similar, for my heart owns no crime. Can our companion feel thus?"

At this moment Father Egbert was brought in. The expression of his countenance did not indicate a serenity of mind: a ghastly paleness dwelt on his cheek, and the efforts which he made to sustain without emotion the presence of those who owed their ruin to his machinations, adding ferocity to apparent sickness, made him an object which it was impossible to regard but with horror,

His scowl was met by Clifford's disdainful glance.

"Dying," said Clifford, "I desire to depart in charity with all mankind, nor wish I to see one fellow-creature involved in my misfortune; but even in this my last hour, I deem it no other than devotion, to recognise the justice of Heaven, in dooming him, who has so long been the enemy of all who were base as himself, to perish in the toils which he had spread for others."

"Enjoy your triumph still," returned Egbert; "it is my consolation to know that it will not be a long one."

"I triumph not; but the feeling will remain so long as my life."

"Perhaps not; for you will yet find that I shall not be carried to the scaffold on which your degraded necks must bend; or if I am, it will be in a state which shall secure me from the misery of shrinking from the gaze of a gaping rabble, and of pitifully submitting to the headsman's blow."

"This must be said," Edmund answered, "by other tongue than thine, ere it can gain credence."

"Your present boast," added Clifford, "is not less fraudulent than you former pretended piety. Wake, wretched being! to reason and repentance. Prepare to meet your inevitable fate with decency."

"Fool! I disdain your counsel; and have taken care to baffle all my foes. Faithful to the heart that demanded, and the strong hand that administered it, already the timely-swallowed venom diffuses itself through my veins. Yet a few moments, and you will see me expire by my own act, while you must suffer public execution. Now renew your exultation.—Ha! ha!"

A strained attempt at laughter followed the conclusion of his speech; and his wildly rolling eye, and convulsed frame, bore ample testimony to the truth of his statement in regard to the poison.

"Miserable man!" cried Edmund; "and hast thou put the seal to thy perdition, by adding to the other crimes which oppressed thy soul, the guilt of suicide?"

"Dreamer, no. He who only rushes on death, which he knows to be inevitable, preferring a less to a greater torture, works not his own end."

"But if—" said Edmund.

"Away with foolish supposition; if there had been a chance, a prospect of escape, I had not done it."

The lieutenant of the Tower entered. "You," said he, directing his speech to Clifford, "must speedily prepare."

"I am ready," was the answer.

"And I," said Edmund, without waiting for a similar announcement.

"For you," Sir William replied, "I have far other tidings. Though nothing could induce the King to forego the oath he had made, never to pardon the nephew of Lord Erpingham; late last night he was wrought upon in your favour. The news has been delayed through the messenger being suddenly struck with the palsy, even on his way hither, which took from him, for hours, both speech and motion; but he has at length forwarded free pardon for you, and eke for Father Egbert."

"I joy to hear it," cried Clifford. "Fly!—fly to Lord Erpingham,—to Mariana. One whom thou hadst devoted to

death shall live," he exultingly cried, addressing himself to Egbert,—"shall live through many happy years. Now, but that thou art too low to occupy more than a passing thought, I could commend thy guilty policy, which has destroyed that life which mercy—unjust mercy—would have spared."

The moment which disclosed to Egbert that but for that act of which he had so recently boasted, his life would not have been sacrificed, was one of unmingled agony.

"Give me antidotes!—give me antidotes!" he franticly exclaimed. "But no; it is all too late. O, cursed poison! I feel thee stealing over my heart. Horror! horror!—both soul and body are lost—lost for ever."

"Wretched man," said Clifford, "solicit for mercy."

"Vain counsel," Egbert replied: "remorse comes to sting; but my crime-charged soul cannot tarry for prayer. Mercy!—Ah!—have I dared to utter that word! Some attendant demon whispered it in mockery of Heaven."

"Nay; waste not thy last moments thus."

"Again you would counsel prayer.—It it too late. The sudden news of pardon—O dreadful aggravation of misery!—accelerates the work of destruction.—I must away—down the dark—dark and fathomless abyss—O horror!"

He sunk to the ground in violent convulsions, evidently expiring. Some of the officers removed him, that his presence might not disturb Clifford, who was now informed, but few minutes remained to him for preparation.

"Trust me," said Edmund, "though life conceded, would, under other circumstances, be regarded as a most royal boon, it saddens my heart more to leave thee to meet death alone, than it was lately depressed while we expected death together."

"Then you are much unkind: I was guilty of urging those reasons which brought you into this strait, and nothing could administer such comfort to me in my dying hour, as the knowledge that you are saved affords."

"I know these to be your feelings: but this miserable selection makes your fate all the more severe in my mind."

"Not so, Edmund. Much it comforts me, to know that you shall live to soothe the grief of my kind uncle; and yet more I rejoice, for that you will be permitted to watch over

my boy, to admonish him when he shall err, where a mother's voice may fail. Begrudge me not this happiness, but share it with me; and now away—away to glad the hearts of those, who, mourning your supposed fall, accuse me as the author of your death."

Edmund groaned, but made no reply.

Sir William Kingston announced the sheriff of London to be in waiting at the verge of the "The Tower Liberty," to receive the body of the prisoner.

"Have with you," cried Clifford; "bear this letter to Elinor," giving his friend a paper. Edmund, I am right glad to have none of thy company on this journey."

Edmund hung on him in speechless sorrow, reluctant to loosen his hold, lest he should accelerate by one moment the execution.

"Nay; I may not be detained," said Clifford, disengaging himself; then, taking a small red cross in his hand, and placing his bonnet on his head, he hastily, but with a firm step, passed from the room, and took his place in the procession, which had previously been arranged, and which now moved slowly towards the Tower gate. Having reached the limits of the fortress, he was delivered over in form to the sheriffs, who forthwith directed the cavalcade prepared beyond, to move towards the place of execution.

Edmund followed: he marked the calm and unaltered deportment of Clifford, whose appearance was that of one entirely bereft of earthly care. He ascended the scaffold with perfect composure, and was speaking to the ecclesiastic, who attended to assist him in his last moments, when the executioner, falling on his knees, implored forgiveness for the part he had undertaken to perform.

"I forgive thee, man," said Clifford; "thou art to me but as the handle of thine axe; and so I hold thee guiltless of my death. There is money for thee to do thy work bravely! for resolution in a headsman is humanity."

He then, apparently impatient for the termination of the scene, threw off his cloak and bonnet. His tippet was next untied. This part of his dress removed, Edmund saw his friend kneel. Overpowered by his feelings, he could hear no more, but hastily forced his way through the crowd, nor looked behind him, from dread of seeing the uplifted axe; for the breathless silence which prevailed satisfied him that

the moment was arrived, in which the devoted Clifford must submit to the last pang.

CHAPTER LII.

Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
Not a hope that dare attend.
BURNS.

"SHOULD the efforts now making be crowned with success," said Elinor, as, with Mariana, Lord Erpingham, and Ferdinand, she passed from the Tower; "should the king be merciful, with what interest shall we hereafter recal this midnight visit."

Lord Erpingham made no reply.

"Shall we not, my lord?" she asked.

"We *should* indeed," was the answer.

"What mean those torches which move about in such numbers?" she inquired, pointing to another part of the hill.

Lord Erpingham was slow to answer, as he knew the lights which had caught her observation were borne by men assisting those employed in erecting the scaffold on which the prisoners were to suffer. He evaded explanation, by saying "It was not uncommon for workmen to labour through the night in the vicinity of the Tower."

The servants who attended with their horses approached. Without further conversation, he and Ferdinand assisted Mariana and Elinor to mount, and the party proceeded to Lord Erpingham's house.

They reassembled between eight and nine in the morning. The deportment of Lord Erpingham was calm; but his countenance was unusually pale.

"I fear your lordship has rested ill," said Elinor; "you are not unwell, my lord?"

"And, my father, you are in tears," Mariana remarked; "have evil tidings reached you since we parted?"

"No, Mariana, no.—Of that," he added, speaking to

himself, "I stood in little fear; for the worst was already known."

Elinor caught at the last words: though not uttered aloud, she heard them but too distinctly.

"And what, what!" she eagerly inquired; "what, my lord, was that *worst?*"

"Press not for explanation: you will know all too soon."

"Know *all!*" exclaimed Elinor; and the wildness of her alarm communicated itself to Mariana.—"What dreadful import lurks beneath these ambiguous sentences?—What is the *worst?*—What is the fearful *all* which you would for a moment veil?"

"My children," said Lord Erpingham, "on me devolves the miserable task of telling that which, had my own selfish feelings been consulted, I should have died before it could be told by mortal. Be firm; and remember that he who has bountifully given, may wisely, mercifully, take away."

"Is it so? Must we abandon the last hope?"

"No, lady," replied the peer, "we must betake ourselves to the last consolation, and hope that those spirits repose in blessedness, who are denied to remain in this world of sorrow."

"Surely, surely, the fatal order has not been signed!" cried Mariana.

"Prepare to know the truth. Last night the warrant for the execution was received at the Tower; therefore were you sent for; but it was the wish of the sufferers that you should not be informed of their doom till some little time had been afforded to prepare you for it, and they desired to spare you the additional bitterness of parting from them, with a knowledge that in this world you could meet no more."

"I'll to the King," said Elinor; "I will find my way to his feet; no guards shall keep me from him; no word of anger, no weapon of death shall repel me!"

"Alas! this cannot be; and if it could, the effort would be affectionately vain. By this the victims have been led to the scaffold."

Not all the endeavours of Lord Erpingham to prepare for this disclosure could prevent the shock from being terrific; Mariana sunk into the arms of Ferdinand, without power to utter one word, and was borne by her brother into the

adjoining apartment; Elinor stood motionless as a statue, scarce seeming to respire.

Lord Erpingham took her by the hand and placed her in a chair.

"Be calm, madam," he said, while the violence of his own emotion sufficiently proved, that if he retained the power to give, he wanted ability to follow such advice. After a long pause, he again addressed her:

"I had hoped to have prepared you for this fatal intelligence by degrees, but my own anguish betrayed me into culpable precipitation. Death, we ought all to hold ourselves ready to meet; and though a scaffold adds to the terrors which many of the strongest and wisest, feel at its approach, yet it is in some degree consoling to know, that if the crime charged against the victims whose fate we deplore ranks among those of the blackest dye, yet there are in their particular case, circumstances which mitigate, and almost excuse the wanderings into which they were betrayed."

"Most true, my lord," Elinor sobbed; "but why—why has not this been told to the King?"

"It has; but the unhappy oath which he made, never to pardon one of my blood, prevented the exercise of his best prerogative in favour of Clifford. The whole nation, I have reason to believe, far from regarding the devoted with horror, unite their prayers for the departing spirits; since it is too late to wish for the remission of the sentence. Even now I learned, that the moment it is known the execution has taken place, the bells of all the neighbouring churches, however it may offend those in power, will toll for the sufferers."

"But may there not be a possibility of moving the King?"

"Were there but the faintest gleam of hope, think you that I would not pursue it with eagerness not to be surpassed even by your own? But alas! it cannot be. That oath, that fatal oath, makes it impossible for the King to relent."

At this moment a shout was heard in the rear of the house, and the word "Pardon!" from a hundred tongues.

"Heard you not that, my lord? It was the cry of 'Pardon!' It grows louder!—it comes this way.—My Clifford is spared."

The cry was repeated.

"The cry is too near, and too loud to be mistaken. *Pardon* is the word. Can this be possible!"

"All is right, my lord—all is well, fair lady," cried Nick Bray, who now burst into the room. "The King has pardoned them. Their noddles may sometimes be laughed at, but they will not be *taken off*."

"Blessings—eternal blessings requite the merciful act!" exclaimed Elinor, while, clasping her child to her heart, tears of rapture streamed in the traces of those of anguish which had preceded them.

"This is indeed a boon!" cried the peer.

An immense crowd was now assembled in front of the house. Shouts of exultation were repeated. The outer door was opened, and one approached the apartment in which Elinor rested.

"He comes," she exclaimed; "now—now, my child, receive a father's embrace."

The door opened, and Sir Geoffrey Brandon entered.

"Whither have you been, my father? Why were you not here sooner?"

"I have been striving, though all hopeless the case, to gain an audience of the King to beg a respite."

"But where—where is he?"

"Speak you of Edmund?"

"Aye, where is he?—for doubtless he and Clifford, on receiving their pardons, were liberated in company."

Sir Geoffrey offered no reply.

"I heard him—I heard Clifford enter."

"I think not," said the father.

"Then fly to meet him. Bid him haste. You look surprised, as though you supposed my senses were bewildered. Know you not, that Clifford and Edmund are spared?"

"I know that Edmund has been pardoned; but—"

"But!" exclaimed Elinor, with a dreadful presentiment of what was to follow. "But what!"—Endeavouring to repel the terrible idea which had presented itself to her mind, she added—"and Clifford too—and Clifford too;—both have been spared. Thou saidst it, jester."

"I did, lady; and so the mob told me."

"Didst thou not see him?"

"I saw Edmund."

"He approaches!" exclaimed Elinor, as the door again unclosed to admit Ferdinand.

"Is he come?" she demanded.

"He is!" was the reply.

"O joy unutterable! But why—why is he not with you?"

"He feared to approach you at this moment."

"Feared to approach me! Can Clifford fear to approach his Elinor?"

"Clifford, madam?"

"Aye, Clifford: whence this wonder? Did you not say he was here?"

"I spoke of Edmund. I am indeed unhappy if I so misled you as to wake a hope that Clifford was in this house. I, madam, am but the bearer of this letter, which he confided to his friend."

"Why did you delay to give it? This will explain his absence."

With convulsive eagerness she tore off the encompassing silk, and read as follows:

"'Beloved Elinor! the bitterness of death is past.'"

"Hear the glad tidings!" cried Elinor, looking at her father, and seeming to reprove the hesitating ambiguity which had alarmed her.—She resumed the reading of the letter, which ran thus:

"'Be firm as you have been faithful; nor doubt of my last prayer on earth, my first thought in Heaven being yours, and yours alone. Consider me now as addressing you from the world of spirits; for when this meets your eye I shall be numbered with the dead.'"

"O God!" exclaimed Elinor.

The paper fell from her hand; she fainted not—she uttered no new exclamation; but inwardly shuddering, she glanced wildly round, and her distracted gaze falling on Ferdinand, she regarded him for some minutes in silence.

"Whence had you that dreadful paper?" she at length demanded.

"From Edmund."

"And was there—was there no hope for—for Clifford?"

"It is my affliction to tell, there was none. Edmund left him on the scaffold!"

Elinor sighed deeply. Her feet seemed about to fail her, when assisted by Lord Erpingham, she sunk into a chair.

The tumult in the street continued, but with occasional intervals of comparative silence. It was during one of these that the tolling of a distant bell was heard.

Lord Erpingham and Ferdinand exchanged looks, intimating to each other that in the solemn sound each recognised the knell of Clifford. It informed them that the execution had actually taken place.

Elinor had heard the bell, and perceived how it was noticed by those who were near her.

"Receive his soul!" she faintly murmured.

Sir Geoffrey Brandon thought she had addressed some request to him, and tenderly desired to hear it repeated.

"I pray for my husband," she replied; "for that dismal note which is now repeated, announces that I am a widow."

The afflicted father turned away to conceal his agitation.

The tolling continued, and the sound came in so many directions, that it seemed clear Lord Erpingham had not been misinformed when he was told that all the neighbouring parishes were resolute to testify their sorrow for the fall of his kinsmen.

"For thee, my child," sighed Elinor, "now unhappily an orphan, thy sad remaining parent must still survive."

Mrs. Roper, who had remained near Mariana, came suddenly into the room.

"Prepare—prepare," she cried, addressing Elinor, "for a new shock."

"I know it all," was the answer. "I—I—"

"One is just arrived from the Tower."

"Let him enter.—I am prepared."

"No, not for such news as I have to impart—you cannot be."

"What mean you? Can vengeance pursue the victim even after death! Can cruelty have dared to insult his dear remains!"

"He lives!"

A cry of universal surprise followed this assertion.

"He is free!"

"What can this mean?" demanded Elinor. "You, madam, would not sport with a wretched mourner's feelings! I heard the knell of death."

"But not for Clifford."

"Can the King have relented?" inquired Lord Erpingham: "has he forgotten his unholy oath?"

"The King of kings," Mrs. Roper replied, "has relented, and removed the tyrannical Henry from earth."

"How! is the King dead?"

"It is for him that the knell is heard which you supposed was sounded for his victim."

"And is my husband safe?"

"Even so. Henry breathed his last shortly after stamping the pardon, which was received at the Tower for Edmund and Egbert. The council did not resolve at once to make his death public, but deeming it inauspicious to commence the new reign with an execution, by their advice, the young king's first act was to spare the life of Clifford."

Elinor looked on her child, but had no time for speech, when Clifford, followed by Edmund and Mariana, burst into the apartment, and overpowered by the unhoped for joy, the heart which had been firm so long, yielded at last, and she fell speechless and motionless in her husband's embrace.

When Clifford knelt on the scaffold, it was not to receive the fatal blow, but to repeat the *miserere*. This ended, the ecclesiastic who was present, was uttering the last words of consolation, when the intelligence arrived that the life of Henry the Eighth had closed, and that the reign of his successor was not to begin in blood.

"Wake—wake," cried the restored husband, while still bending over the inanimate form of Elinor, "wake, Elinor, to happiness, to witness universal joy, and receive at last the meed of generous heroism and confiding love."

"The call has not been made in vain," said Lord Erpingham; "her eyes unclose, consciousness and recollection return."

"O yes," sobbed Elinor, "that voice would almost raise me from my tomb. Marvel not, my Clifford, that I am thus overcome; for, snatched from the appalling abyss in which I lately sighed, to the perception of a feeble mortal, it seems but a brief step from bliss so exquisite as this to Heaven."

THE END.

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TRACEY;

OR,

THE APPARITION.

BY MRS. THOMSON,

AUTHOR OF

"ANNE BOLEYN," "CAREW RALEGH," &c.

LONDON:

THOMAS HODGSON, 13, PATERNOSTER ROW.

TRACEY; OR, THE APPARITION.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOTHER AND HER SONS.

It was in the early spring of the year 1752 that a lady was seen walking slowly, and evidently with difficulty, along the approach to Castle Elphinstone ; for so in this our chronicle shall that edifice, which, with its territorial appurtenances, forms one of the main subjects of my narrative, be termed. The lady was about middle age, and still, as far as figure went, of that deportment which is called noble. Her face was strongly marked, and those high features, which are traceable in certain races, gave a hardness, now pencilled and sharpened as they were, to its outline. But the soft eye, and look of melancholy sweetness subdued that character, and revealed traces of a beauty which had once, indeed, been celebrated in song in the region which she now traversed, an exile and a beggar.

Two children accompanied her, both boys ; the eldest, then about ten years of age, was as handsome a specimen of that period of life, where infancy ends and boyhood begins, as could be seen. His high forehead was, indeed, concealed by a large, round beaver hat, with a slouching feather in it ; but his dark eyes, over which the rich fringes of his eyelashes fell to shade, but not to obscure their brightness, were full of spirit, which ofttimes (for the boy had already tasted life's troubles) softened into pensiveness, or melted with an affection called forth by circumstances. His figure, his gait, all betokened—to use a term to which I am partial—*breed ;* but his dress, despite the attempt of the long feather, touched with a dingy hue as it was, and despite an old-fashioned brooch with which his collar was fastened, looked as if poverty

had already stamped its peculiar characters upon it; poverty too, that still struggled to ape prosperity.

The younger boy was scarcely emancipated from the bib-and-tucker age, and was cased up in a warm cloth dress, and his little hands, one of which his mother held, were covered with an indiscriminate glove, that obliterated fingers. But he, too, must needs have his feather, a stiff, upright black one, with a red top, and both these boys wore round their waists a scarf, of what I shall here presume to call the Elphinstone tartan, borrowing that noble name, and forging that same tartan for my own purposes. Lady Janet, for so the mother was named, wore the same description of dress, on a feminine and larger scale, as her sons; it had the same characteristics of style, combined with decay,—of a retrospective finery,—of a grandeur that might with propriety have been entombed. Yet she carried it off better than her sons; they, poor children, appeared as if tricked out for a purpose, and were absurd. She looked unfortunate. Nothing could render her ridiculous. Her manner of walking, of speaking, spoke the lady; and the very attempt in her attire still to assert the usual habiliments of rank, showed that she could not, even in her evident extremity, descend to the customs of the class below her.

"And why, mother," asked the youngest boy, as they paced along, wearily enough, "did you not bring Helen with you? Helen, to carry me? I am *so* tired!"

"Because, my darling," replied Lady Janet, in an accent which had lost the peculiarity of the country they were in, Scotland, and had borrowed a touch from France, "I wished to bring you myself, alone. We are near *home* now," she added, looking anxiously forward to some grey towers soaring above a wood already bursting into beauty, "and then there will be troops—yes, troops of servants—Sholto, to carry you, and to help you; and Bernard and you——" she paused at the picture her mother's fancy had drawn—of her boys happy and welcome in the home of her own infancy. The tears started into her eyes.

Bernard, the elder boy, now pressed her hand. "But are you sure that my uncle will let us in?" he asked, with a face glowing one instant with expectation, and, with the changing expressions of childhood, softening the next with sympathy.

Lady Janet answered him, looking down upon him as she spoke: "Can they see you, my darling, and refuse? They could never turn us from our *home!*" She walked on, nevertheless, with an anxious air, that seemed to say, "If they *should!*" but she relieved her thoughts by gazing on the well-known, or rather well-remembered, scenes around her;

for it was years since she had been in her father's house, now her brother's domain; years since she had felt the breeze from her native hills, or gazed upon the towers of Castle Elphinstone.

These were now plainly seen; the one, strong, stern, distinctly battlemented, looking proudly down upon its subject lands; the other lower and smaller, and almost mantled in ivy: thus they stood, rising above a deep dell of wood, through which flowed a narrow, rapid stream, which irrigated the fine expanse of park into which it broke its impetuous way, dashing and sparkling beneath the bright skies.

Lady Janet, as, not only the towers, but a long line of battlemented buildings burst upon her, stood still—all at once mute—and allowed the hands of her children, hitherto so firmly grasped, to fall from her. What were her reflections—what, rather, her emotions—as she gazed upon that home of her youth, outcast and unforgiven as she was; what sweet and sad remembrances crowded into her heart, her children could not *then* know: they knew it afterwards, when she could no longer gaze, nor long, nor suffer, nor be repulsed!

All at once she sank, as it were, upon the grass, and wept—not so bitterly as so passionately. She seemed to forget herself: and then all, all was in the past. "My home! my home!" were the only words that she could speak, amid the strugglings for composure. But, suddenly, she dried her tears, and was calm; for hers was an elastic nature, and she had, besides still a weary walk, and a wearier day's duty, before her.

She consoled her speechless and half-puzzled children by breathing into their ears hopes which, perhaps, she had not; and, as she went along, talked to them thus:—

"Yes, Sholto, that is, indeed, Castle Elphinstone; and there, Bernard, look up, my boy! is the flag flying at the top of yon tower; and, if you were near enough to read what is on it," added the daughter of an ancient race, her Scotch blood mantling in her cheeks, "you would find this motto—'Doe, or die.'"

"It shall be my motto as long as I live," said Bernard.

"And now we come into the wood: this is the road, I think, down here. My father, your grandfather, my children, planted this wood when I was born. Ah!" she murmured to herself, "what a weary pilgrimage since! But before we turn that way, look Bernard, at the deer; are they not beautiful creatures? And see! down by those thorn-trees, I and your uncle used to play, when we were children, and dress ourselves

with the May boughs. And look beyond: see what a grand, beautiful park it is! those hills bound it; those hills are your uncle's also, as far—farther than your eye can reach."

Bernard looked on silently, for busy was his boyish mind with anticipations which the fear of giving pain repressed. How long, nevertheless, were those very trees—those hills—and *how* were they remembered!

"Will it be *all* Bernard's?" asked Sholto.

"Yes *all*," replied Lady Janet, decisively, "if he has his own; but we must walk on;" and she led them, determinately, into the wood.

The road was long and winding, and passed, at length, after many a disappointing turn, over a stone bridge, beneath which the rapid river dashed its course; then the way was up a gentle acclivity; and then, coming very suddenly out of the wood, the principal entrance of Castle Elphinstone was before the travellers.

Lady Janet stood for a moment transfixed; but she mastered the deep pangs that darted into her broken and hopeless heart, and moved on rapidly. An arch, through which the sunbeams played, led into a large court, graced on one side with a fine tower underneath, which should have been the entrance, and which was the clock-tower. The walls of the court were perfectly shrouded with ivy; a little gate, fastened by a padlock, formed the mean protection of the arch. Lady Janet stood, therefore, close to the home into which, before *one* act of imprudence, she had dwelt a loved and privileged inmate. All was not the same. "We used to enter there," she said, pointing out the clock-tower to her boys; "but my poor brother"——she checked herself, and sought for the bell amid the ivy—it was stiff with rust, and her feeble strength could scarcely suffice to pull it.

Its voice sounded like a knell in the dull court-yard.

For many minutes she awaited—an humble petitioner as she was—the condescension of a reply to that sonorous appeal. She trembled all the time, and she could scarcely, when footsteps were heard coming across the court, stand upright; she was forced to cling to the iron stanchions of the gate with one hand; the other rested on the shoulder of her eldest boy. The child looked up into her face with a half-boding, half-inquiring look. Her first words, when she accosted the servant, were impressed on his memory for ever.

"My Lord Elphinstone *is* at home," she said quickly, yet with the involuntary courtesy of habit; "I wish to see him; tell him that his sister, Lady Janet Stewart, is here, and waits, with her children, to see him."

The man looked surprised ; for he was an English servant, and knew not the details of that sad and singular history which had brought Lady Janet to her brother's gate a suppliant. He bowed, however, low, and retired, saying that "he would see."

The mother and her children stood speechless, awaiting him. The linnet sang cheerily over their heads, and the fresh air from the expanse of park scattered the clustering curls which fell on Bernard's shoulders ; but all was unheeded by Lady Janet ; she was immoveable as the grey, stern towers which threw their shadows on the grass ; and her children stirred not, spellbound by that moment of expectation, of which the elder one understood the cause.

At length the man returned. His face was grave and pitying, as he told Lady Janet that his lordship refused to see her, and that she "was to get no access there." Those were his words.

In a moment the blood suffused Lady Janet's cheek and brow, and her spirit—that of a race as proud and valiant as any of Scotland's sons—bore her up, but it was not for long : a look of unalterable sorrow fixed upon her countenance, and never left it : "the event," as one who knew her well expressed it, "sat close at her heart for ever."

She spoke not a word, but turned away, and giving to each of her children a hand, descended the bank. At the bridge she lingered, looked back at the portal with a faint hope, perhaps, that she should be recalled ; but no face appeared between the iron stanchions, no voice bade her not to go—all was silent, inhospitable.

She retraced her steps ; as she struck into the wood, the castle clock, tolling, proclaimed that it was two o'clock—the hour, as she remembered, when her brother used to go forth to ride. A transient hope caused her again to linger ; she gazed earnestly and long at the portal, but all was still : the lord of the castle, once strong, now weak ; once independent, now in the hands of lawyers and satellites, came not ; and sickening as she went, until the ground seemed to sink beneath her, she went on.

Then her eldest son grasped her hand and spoke. He had comprehended all her feelings. "Do not mind, mother," he said, whilst his dark eyes sought hers ; "when I am a man you *shall* come here. This castle is mine by right, you know."

Alas, no ! No law of primogeniture made it *his* ; but though the intended consolation gave a new pang, that which lay so heavy at the heart was the unkindness of a brother, always

fondly loved—always, through change of clime and change of condition, remembered with an over-partial indulgence. Lady Janet never knew that he *would* have seen her, nor that the cruel refusal was dictated by one who had his own selfish ends to promote in keeping from Lord Elphinstone his nearest kindred.

As she went along, a conviction that he could not thus mean to send her fainting with hunger and weariness from his gate entered the generous mind of Lady Janet. The idea consoled her—gave her strength—strength to traverse the rich green sward, and to reach, without sitting down *there* to die, the boundaries of that noble domain—strength to turn round, ere she left it for ever, and to bid to that scene of her flattered youth a last adieu; for she knew that whenever the day might come in which her son, Lord Elphinstone's presumptive heir, might claim those broad lands as his own, her spirit should be at rest; she felt that for *her* it little mattered, now, where her head rested.

That night she remained in the town or village near, and wrote—a last effort—a letter to her brother. She begged him for an interview; she entreated him to let "her petition take place in his heart, and that, in this hope, she should remain at Elphinstone that night and a day." She *did* remain: no answer came.

Then the disconsolate mother set off in a public conveyance back again to Edinburgh, where, a few weeks afterwards, she died.

Before her death, she again wrote to her brother. "Not," she said, "to beg his protection or his favour, for the time for that was gone, but remembering the dear affection which had once subsisted between them, she longed, in the hour of death, to be reconciled to her only brother, to receive his pardon, and to bless him." That letter was suppressed. Meantime, the estate of Elphinstone was settled on another family, and Bernard's prior claim was sunk.

During her last illness, embittered as it was by penury, Lady Janet's character rose in dignity and strength; she displayed the sentiments of a heroine with the piety of a Christian.

Night after night, for a week before her death, she sent for her eldest son to her bedside, and, not expecting to see him in the morning, strove to impress upon his young and flexible mind a sense of his just claim to that proud castle which she had shown him, and to impress him with the desire, should he ever succeed to it, to deem it a sacred trust for the benefit of all who depended on him. She was then reduced to the last stage of pecuniary distress; but no privations could induce

her to part with a few trinkets—all that Fortune had left her—memorials of the family; these she placed in the keeping of Helen Hewit, her faithful companion rather than servant.

One night she sent for her eldest son;—the damps of death were on her brow, and, some hours before, she had eaten of that bread, and drunk of that cup, in which she humbly hoped for salvation;—then, in the presence of witnesses, she had solemnly sworn that Bernard and Sholto were her sons. The eldest, at her summons, came to her.

The room had not been cleared of those solemn elements which had been so recently administered, and a minister of the Episcopal Church of Scotland still knelt by Lady Janet's bedside. His voice died away as the child entered. All was silent, until Mrs. Hewit, drawing the boy to her, bade him "kneel down by his mother."

Then, at that solemn hour, when the spirit, longing to be released, still lingered amid the affections of earth, Lady Janet, laying her hand on the head of her son, thus spoke:—"God bless you, my child. God make you a good, an honest man." She paused—gasped, and then added, "Take a sword in your hand, as your ancestors have done, and—and"——the last words were indistinct; but the folded hands—the upraised eyes, implied that they were an appeal for her child to Heaven.

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY PARTY.

It was many years after this incident, and in England, not in Scotland, that the persons who are mainly concerned in this narrative were brought together by a casualty.

It was late in the autumn of the year, eleven years after, that a pack of fox-hounds was established near the village of Hasketon, in ———shire. Pardon the bathos; but the county talked of nothing else. There had not been a pack of fox-hounds so near since old Mr. Tracey's (the father of the first Lord Ravenspur) fox-hounds were given up. And many still remembered *him;* and a print of him was in many a farm-house, with his huntsman's cap, his buckskins, and his laced scarlet-coat, riding away as fast as he could. And now his grandson, the Honourable Mr. Tracey, hunted the county, and "things," to use a popular phrase, "were as they ought to be

again ;" which means, there were regular meetings, and plenty of dancings and carousings afterwards.

One afternoon, when the road in the village of Hasketon was strewn with dead leaves, which a high wind was carrying about in all directions, and, as the hounds and huntsmen were returning from a long run, they had occasion to pass the Manor-House of Haskreton as they came by ; and there stood by the gate the two daughters of Mr. Howard of Haskreton, looking on as the party passed

One of these, indeed, could *not* look on, for she was blind ; yet she always made use of exactly the same phrases as those who have the blessing of sight employ. She was a tall, large woman, thirty years old, or more—so strong-looking, that one could never have supposed that delicacy of health had deprived those rolling opaque orbs of sight—yet so it was ; but since the age of eighteen, when her blindness came on, she had known better health than heretofore ; she had become even robust, and her manners had assumed a hard, decisive tone. The character had been fortified with the deprivation of a faculty, and the interest attached to disease had yielded to a certain fear which she inspired.

The sister, who leaned on her arm, was eleven years younger than herself, and was a slight, almost still a growing girl. She was without cap or bonnet, but over her head, contrasting with her blooming cheek, she had tied a dark blue silk-handkerchief, on which the ringlets of her hair played, almost shrouding her countenance from the view of the passengers.

The decided style of features of Honora were not traceable in her sister, Lilia. All was soft and flexible, feminine, though expressive, in the face of the younger Miss Howard ; and there was a look of serenity, indeed, of joyousness, which is rarely observed on the countenances of those who are the unfortunate subjects of any bodily infirmity. The hue of Honora's complexion, too, was pale and dark, almost of a grey tinge, whilst the most exquisite tints blushed on that of Lilia, and lighted up her clear blue eyes whenever she spoke or moved.

In dress they were also dissimilar. Honora wore a large poke bonnet, fastened by a dark green riband ; and the rest of her garments were in correspondence, plain and useful. Lilia had an attempt at fashion in her costume : a black lace mode fell over her shoulders, and the boddice of her white gown was laced with sky-blue.

They stood within a low paling, partly shrouded from view by the trees, and watched the slow paddling of the pack of fox-hounds through the dirty road. Presently the huntsmen appeared in sight, and then one of them, the brother of these

two ladies, fell back, and rode up to the paling to speak to them.

"Are you not rather exposed here?" he said in a low voice; "I mean as to the wind, which is sharp—I don't mean as to observation. Let me recommend you, Honora, to draw your shawl around you."

"But I want to hear," said Honora, "who all these people are; the foremost, he is passing now, is *he* Mr. Tracey?"

"Yes," whispered Lilia, "which is he?"

"You must speak low," replied the young man, bending over the railings, "for he is remarkably keen in hearing, like you, Honora." He touched his sister's cheek playfully with the butt end of his whip, to gain attention, and smiled, though no responsive look returned that gentle act.

"Is that he?" interrupted Honora, directing her head towards a particular portion of the road, distinguishing by the sounds of the horses' hoofs the several equestrians.

"No; that is young Bernard Elphinstone, the elder of the two brothers; you understand me? He bows to you, Lilia—he bows to you, Honora."

As these words were spoken, a fine young man, whose cheeks were flushed by the recent exercise, rode slowly past the sisters, looked back, and gracefully bowed down to his very saddle, nodding more familiarly to William, for so was the brother of Honora and Lilia named, ere he pursued his way.

"Lilia, colouring a little, said quickly,—"But 'tis not Mr. Elphinstone that I want to see. Which is Mr. Tracey?"

"There," answered William, pointing to a gentleman who, with a gay pace, rode a very superb hunter; he was dressed, as, indeed, were the whole party, in a scarlet suit, wearing a black velvet cap, such as now the huntsmen sport, but which was formerly the prevalent head-gear of all who were engaged in that exhilarating pursuit.

"You observe," said William, perceiving that Lilia's eyes were fixed intently on Mr. Tracey, "that Elphinstone does not join him?"

"No; and why not?" asked Honora. "Mr. Tracey's family, though new, is so upraised by the great excellence and the talents of his father, that all must be honoured to approach him."

"There may be reasons," answered William, looking down. "Well, Lilia, what do you think of him?"

"I am more taken with the appearance of the gentleman who rides near him," replied Lilia, pointing to a gentleman who was, at that moment, speaking to Tracey.

"That is his cousin, young Aylmer, his inseparable chum—

and victim." William spoke these last words in a low tone, and then, drawing back, permitted to the inquisitorial Lilia a full view of the individuals referred to.

Mr. Tracey, afterwards Lord Ravenspur, was the least handsome of the two; yet he was there, in the full vigour of his youth, if, indeed, it ever had vigour; for his extreme thinness of form and countenance, and his excitable temperament, indicated original delicacy of frame. His stature was, however, good, approaching to six feet, and his skill in all manly exercises, particularly his ardour in hunting, proverbial. And there was no taste so likely to propitiate all classes at that time as that for the chase. Men, and women too, forgave sins wholesale where a pack of hounds was in the case; and no benefit of clergy was equal to the voice of the whipper-in.

Mr. Tracey's features were not particularly handsome: they were, however, tolerably regular, so that the effect of his countenance was not impeded by any ruggedness or harshness; and it was impossible—the ladies in those days thought it impossible—to resist the magic glance of his dark, sunken, grey eye, much more to turn an unwilling ear to the music of his voice; for his voice was music, clear, rich, yet soft; and his laugh was like the laugh of innocence, and was one of those few laughs that inspire sympathy—alas!

Mr. Aylmer was, at that time, a model of beauty—I was going to say, of manly beauty; but that is too definite a term; for the fair, pink, and white complexion, the features so symmetrical and so well turned, belong not to that class of beauty. His were the vulgar, outward attributes; the *real* attractions are of a very different character indeed.

"Describe Mr. Tracey to me, Lilia," said Honora, after a silence of some moments.

"I never was so disappointed," said Lilia; "he looks old—eight-and-twenty, I dare say; he is not to be compared to his cousin. But, good heavens, William! he is looking back, nay, stopping. Honour, dear, let us go home."

As the sisters retreated, William rode towards Mr. Tracey, who accosted him in the following manner:—

"Howard, it occurs to me that I have never yet visited your father at the manor-house. What a nice place it is! Will it be intruding now? Aylmer, ride on first and see; say that I would not for the world intrude! What a very pretty place this is! Has it been long in your family?"

"In your father—in my lord's family," answered William, courteously; "we are but tenants here."

"Oh, indeed; I really did not know it; and my lord is quite right not to let me see the whole extent of his broad lands.

But surely, surely, the Howards of the manor-house are some time known among us. Has it been a recent fancy on the part of your good father to dispose of his property here?"

"Two years ago," returned William, with some hesitation. "I gave my consent to cut off the entail."

"Very liberal, indeed; you didn't know so much of fathers as I do;—and for the benefit of sisters, probably?"

"Yes, for family reasons," replied William, colouring deeply, and looking grave. "I am ashamed," he resumed, recovering his composure, "at this entrance. We want new gravel; and our evergreens were cut up last winter. I must speak to my father about it."

"Here is Aylmer returning," said Tracey, with some impatience. "Some stupid mistake, I'll swear. Aylmer! Harry Aylmer! are you dreaming?"

"Mr. Howard is at dinner, so I left your compliments," said Aylmer, looking straight forward. "Good day, Mr. Howard; you'll be late." He bowed, and rode on as he spoke and Tracey turned his horse's head also to the gate, and took leave of William Howard. "How stupid of you, Aylmer!" he broke forth, afterwards. "Did you see no one?—not even that fair girl who stood by the palings?"

"She's engaged, all the country says," replied Aylmer, "to Bernard Elphinstone."

Tracey fell into a reverie.

"What! to the man that refuses to visit me?" he broke out at last, suddenly. He then relapsed into a train of thought which was not disturbed by Aylmer, nor, indeed, by any one else, until he reached his home.

CHAPTER III.

A FAMILY DINNER.

Mr. Howard had been a widower, and had married again, a proceeding which inspires more resentment than any act of a respectable nature that I know of. Moreover, he had just completed a monument to his first wife, had just given himself out as a disconsolate mourner to the whole parish, leaving a testimonial to that effect which should endure as long as the church itself, when he was, as the county paper announced the happy husband of a second consort.

Mrs. Howard, who sat every Sunday at Church opposite to the falsifying stone which proclaimed her husband to be a lonely wanderer in this vale of woe, was a calm, determined woman, as intensely selfish as women who have lived upon a small fortune of their own generally are. She and her husband began their married life by mutual civility, then quarrelled furiously for a year or two, then found it would not do, —then became civil to each other again. She was old and withered, but brought the interest of a pretty fortune, a nice carriage, a lady's-maid, and a good deal of plate and linen to Haskreton Manor ; so, on the whole, the marriage was generally approved of by that kind and energetic portion of the community who, by their own firesides, entertain themselves by settling the affairs of their friends.

The family, of course, broke up into parties after, what seemed to three grown-up children, an act of separation on the part of their father. Honora, or Honour, as she was called, received the new inmate with a lofty politeness, and treated her with a cutting disdain ; and when the tempest of connubial discord arrived, sided determinedly and nobly with her father. It became a difficult question which hated each other most—the daughter the mother, or the mother the daughter ; and living in the same house, there was a perpetual fuel to that burning fire which never died away.

William, Mr. Howard's only son, had suffered greatly when he knew that his mother's seat at table—her place in the household—was to be supplied. He was a young man of feminine virtues, and when I say that, I mean not to speak disparagingly. His was a beautiful nature—kind, just, and, where necessity impelled it, courageous. His peculiarities were an over-sensitive apprehensiveness, a state of perpetual scruple, a modesty out of reason, and a humility which no prosperity, no praise, no preference, could ever change into even an allowable share of self-importance. Of course, he behaved better to his mother-in-law than any one else, and was perpetually begging her pardon, and trying to conciliate her, both to himself and his sisters.

Lilia, his fair and younger sister, was his confidant and ally ; five or six years' difference of age was there between them. Lilia, quick, yet refined, sensitive like her brother, and as gentle as he was, could well enter into all his feelings, and comprehend, as it gradually unfolded before her, the real greatness of a mind which could make perpetual sacrifices, and yet deem them nothing. *She*, as she constantly professed, could not do so ; neither could she ; for the effects of an early indulgence from her lost mother, modified by the noblest

nature, and corresponding to the passionate earnestness of youth, characterised even the loving and sympathising Lilia. For the rest, her beauty and her ready mirth, her then perfect health, and the reputation which her dawning attractions had already acquired, supplied to William those sources of brotherly pride which are somehow so strongly mixed up in men's best affections, and which Honora's peculiar infirmity precluded his feeling for his elder sister.

The dinner-table of the manor-house was generally considered incomplete without the presence of a brother of Mr. Howard's—a dry, caustic old bachelor, who, assuming the privileges of relationship, was privileged to bring forward the most disagreeable of the ugly family of truths, and entitled to the forbearance of not hearing, in return, of any of his own very unpleasant attributes. He never came in any Christian time, never in any Christian dress; but just looked in, as he called it, in a dark spencer over his thread-bare coat, a drab pair of shorts, with gaiters, and with his umbrella under his arm, and stood looking on at the party eating, declaring that he had dined two hours ago, till every one had left off persuading him, when he suddenly took off his spencer, laid down his umbrella, and sat down to partake of the repast. The worst of it was, he was not rich—Patience could have performed her perfect work more easily if he had been. The creature, by his assumption, might have been the owner of thousands; or, at all events, of as much as it takes to make a man hold up his head in the world.

Mrs. Howard, perfectly well-dressed, sat in great form during the whole of the repast: whilst her husband and his brother discoursed, much in the tone of a loud quarrel, on such topics as interested them. Uncle Humphrey's walks were generally journeys of discovery as to gaps in hedges, or dilapidations in fences, and he usually worked up his brother into a fury before he had done with him.

"I say, brother, brother Thomas, this soup's very thin; when do you mean to let that cottage of yours? The chimney-top's off now, and I just stepped in as I passed; the very walls are running down with damp. Have you seen your melon-beds lately?—all gone to decay for want of gathering. Those sheep of yours had best be sold, I can tell you; there's a terrible disease among the sheep this year. William, let me tell you that pattern of a waistcoat is quite common at Sheldon; the very lawyer's clerks have it there."

William, whose apprehensiveness upon the subject of dress was consistent with the rest of his character, coloured a little; whilst his father observed,—

"That's true, I dare say; but what signifies dress? Why, I've worn this same pattern for these twenty years."

Honora, meantime, sat abstracted, musing on the incident of the day—the little event in a life passed, though she would not have owned it, in melancholy monotony. At the mention of waistcoats she again broke out,—"Tell me again, Lilia, how was Mr. Tracey dressed? and is he tall—how tall? I can judge by the height of my father; I know his height."——

"I wonder," interrupted Uncle Humphrey, "that you looked at him—I mean that Lilia did, when Bernard Elphinstone was there. He's a likely man enough; of a proper height and make; a finer man than his brother. There's a great talk of his leaving the county, that is, when he has got his property. I may well say *when*; that's a queer word, indeed, when the Court of Chancery is in the case. Did you speak to him, Lilia, dear, to-day? How exceedingly weak and bad this tea is! John, take it away!"

"I really," answered Lilia, quickly, "am not sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Bernard Elphinstone to—to ——"

"Why, I thought you met him at the Hopes' last winter?"

"Yes; but when an acquaintance has not been kept up since, I ——"

"You danced with him?" said the pertinacious uncle.

"Yes; but what's dancing? You can't know much of a person dancing only with him; and then ——"

"But you rode with him over to Biggleswade last summer? pursued Uncle Humphrey.

"Oh, yes—with a party! But in a party one does not see much of any one, you know," answered Lilia, colouring deeper and deeper.

"He has called here, has he not?" said the troublesome uncle, addressing the whole party.

"He has called on *me*," Mrs. Howard observed, in a marked tone; whilst William added, meekly,—"Of course."

"A wedding visit." And Mrs. Howard looked at her bracelets, and sighed audibly.

"That's an age ago!" bolted out Mr. Howard, as he passed the port to his brother.

Mrs. Howard scarcely spoke many words consecutively, but she made an effort, looked at her husband, and, gasping for breath, said, "Just two years, my dear, to-day."

"Bless me!" cried Mr. Howard, "to-day is our wedding-day, is it? It had quite slipped my memory. Are you sure you're right? John, another bottle of port. Yes, I dare say you're right, my dear. Many, many happy returns of the day to us all, my *dear!*"

"You are very good, my *dear!* It is quite a pity you have the trouble of remembering it."

"Your good health, madam," said William, respectfully.

"And many more wedding-days to us all!" cried Uncle Humphrey.

"Mrs. Howard"—Honora struggled with her antipathies as she spoke—"my kind wishes, of course. I cannot *look* upon my father's face, but I will trust it is a happy one."

There was a silence of a moment; then Lilia said, "You were very good to take your place amongst us all. We must make you happy among us," and she kissed the hand of her mother-in-law as she spoke.

This family scene having been enacted, and the forcing-pump applied to bring up such shows of affection as could be mustered, Mrs. Howard took the opportunity of informing her family that she was in ill health—news too good, as Uncle Humphrey whispered, to be true; that "her own friends," an invisible host about whom she talked occasionally, were uneasy about her; and that she had made up her mind to change the scene for a while. Her eloquence overcame her, and she drew out a handkerchief and shed a few most becoming tears as she spoke. "It was no great distance, and she would take Lilia with her, if she liked to go."

Lilia looked aghast at this proposal.

"A dear old friend of mine," Mrs. Howard began again, "we were like sisters."

"Fancy," whispered Uncle Humphrey, "what they must be!"

"Affliction, in the loss of a very superior young man, to whom she was engaged, has, indeed, altered my dear friend's looks."

"I daresay," said her husband, "she's no longer young now, my dear, you should remember; and it cannot be expected."

"She was always interesting, and a woman of a very pretty independence, and of an extreme piety. Her house"—Mrs. Howard shook her head expressively as she spoke—"is like a nunnery for goodness."

"I envy you, Lilia," said Uncle Humphrey, "your stay there. And pray, madam, how is it that saint has never blessed any worthy object with her hand?"

"*She* think of marriage!" said Mrs. Howard, reverently. "I should not dare to name the subject before her; and she is as superior to all the vanities of life as an angel who looks down from heaven!"

"Well, well, my dear, you must know best," said Mr.

Howard ; "but as to vanity—poor thing !—there's not much chance of that with her very ordinary face."

"Mr. Howard, if you please, we'll close the conversation," interposed Mrs. Howard, rising ; and, in order to avoid the desecration of this sacred subject, she led the way to the drawing-room, William opening the door for her as she went out.

It was still daylight, and Lilia, her face flushed from some hidden cause, rushed out into the grounds, to catch a little fresh air, or to relieve an overburdened heart, in solitude, before the evening closed in.

The manor-house, like most of such places which have not been altered in modern days, boasted but a small pleasure-ground compared with its acres of kitchen-garden. There was a lawn, upon which stood a walnut-tree, surrounded by a narrow gravel walk and a sunk fence ; beyond, a view into the far distant country, up a rich valley, varied by the prospect of a straggling village, gave air and dignity to the little demesne of the house.

The kitchen-garden lay in a hollow to the left, combining both flower-garden and kitchen-garden into one, graced in the centre with a deep well, and a weeping-willow over it, and finishing off with a broad terrace-walk of grass at the higher end, which was also surmounted, at one corner, by a gazebo.

Towards this point Lilia hastened ; for she felt that desire which is common to some people in slight agitation—to ascend—to breathe freely—to look down upon the world—to trample vexations under foot.

"He is quite deceived if he thinks that I am vexed—that he distresses me in the least." Such were her reflections as she paced rapidly along. "Only, why this inconsistency ? When I met him at Hopewood, we were almost intimate together ; since then, why almost single me out, if only to—to insult me—no, not exactly that—by this absurd coldness and distance ?"

It happened, that during the existing year, Lilia had, in the short glimpses of gaiety permitted to her secluded life, met and admired Mr. Bernard Elphinstone, a young gentleman of the neighbourhood. He, on his part, had shown her such attentions as to authorise a common report of their mutual attachment. And he was one who could never plead his suit in vain—young, gay-hearted, and comely—manly and honourable, and blessed, apparently, with more than competence, disencumbered, as the world thought, there was scarcely a match in the county which he might not successfully have

sought. Suddenly, however, his marked preference to Lilia Howard appeared to cease. He no longer sought her hand for the first country dance, when, at Major Woodcock's—a good-natured fox-hunter, with a large family—they called in the church performers, and struck up a tink-a-tink on the very instruments that had doled forth the hundredth Psalm. He rarely called at the manor-house; and when Lilia did chance to meet him, strolling, as she sometimes did, along the road to Sheldon, he bowed, made some commonplace inquiry, and did not jump off, as he *had* done, and walk home by her side, holding his horse by the bridle.

"—And to-day," thought Lilia, who now ran over all those little marks of coldness for about the twentieth time in her mind,—"just a bow,—that was all! I am sorry now that I ever kept myself disengaged for the supper-dance, in hopes to—it's of no use flattering these men with hopes; they always hope too much, at any rate. However, it is quite easy to me to get over it; I don't in the least mind about it. 'Twill be all the same ten years hence, I suppose," she added, with a deep sigh, that showed it would not be the same. "I shall beg my friends not to invite me to meet him—though, perhaps, that may look odd; and I cannot, in my conscience, charge Mr. Bernard Elphinstone with any dishonourable conduct. I cannot say he has behaved ill to me; his only offence is"—she gave vent to another sigh as the thought arose—"indifference."

She walked on. But ere we pursue the theme of poor Lilia's cogitations, one brief digression we claim. *Who* was, then, the subject of her thoughts? Among the various changes in the neighbourhood, during the last four years, none had excited more conversation than the establishment of two brothers at Hopewood, a fine old place in the neighbourhood. Of the family and origin of these young men little was decisively known, but they were believed to be the descendants of a long and noble line of ancestry, and heirs to an enormous fortune in the north: the north was, however, a vague term; and people were quite contented with not inquiring further, when they observed the brothers to be received in the highest quarters; and perceived that they not only inhabited, but maintained, Hopewood in all that condition of which country squires are such excellent judges.

The charities of Mr. Elphinstone, his decorous demeanour, his unimpeachable moral character, his love of the old church and the old monuments, were satisfactory testimonies to the clergymen. His guardians, too, who had first taken the place, were men of high rank and honour, and there was, in all the

bearing of the youth, an incontestable evidence of gentle breeding.

Still, however, except Mr. Hope, of Hopewood, no one exactly knew who these young men were: but he was satisfied, and to him all the county looked up.

As Lilia, revolving many painful, some pleasant, circumstances in her thoughts, walked on, she was interrupted by William overtaking her, and saying behind her,—

"Perhaps you would rather be alone—don't let me disturb your reveries."

"Reveries!" I was indulging in no reveries," replied Lilia, with a start. "Dear William! what shall I do? What will you advise me to do, in regard to this threatened visit with my mother? I have certain objections to it," she added, blushing, "that Miss Purdillion's place is quite near to Mr. Bernard Elphinstone's."

"Indeed! and you do not wish, perhaps, to encourage his attentions?" asked William, whose pride in his sister was the only feeling of pride that he ever cherished—and led him to suppose that Lilia had only to smile for others to be undone.

"His attentions? O, dear William! there are no attentions; or, if there were—but that is out of the question; but I should not like the Hopes to think that I put myself in anybody's way, nor the Woodcocks to joke about it—that is all. As to Mr. Elphinstone himself, I assure you—but there is no occasion to assure you—that what *he* may think cannot be of any moment to me."

William said, very gently:—

"Oh, dear, no! However, I would rather you were in Mr. Elphinstone's society than in that of Mr. Tracey, Lilia: there are awkward reports about him; and though he has been remarkably civil about the shooting, I neither like him nor his friend Aylmer. I understand that they are both men of indifferent repute in the county.

"Then you may be sure, with a person of Miss Purdillion's known sanctity, that we should never see them within her doors," rejoined Lilia, as they turned round, and drew near to the house, and prepared to encounter Mrs. Howard and Uncle Humphrey.

"No," replied William, thoughtfully: "no; you would be safe *there*. And really, Lilia, I recommend you, as a little change of scene must be pleasant, to go." So, that she was to go, was determined upon.

CHAPTER IV.

A LITERARY NOBLEMAN.

Lord Ravenspur, to whom reference has been made in the preceding chapter, was one of those peers raised from among the flower of the commoners, whom faction promoted in the early part of the reign of George the Third. His merits, as an author, had been amply—as the world now thinks—too amply rewarded with fame in his generation. His reputation for virtue, for religion, for every quality that could give lustre to rank, or felicity to domestic life, was great; but was disbelieved by some who knew intimately a character which was held up as a model. None knew him better than his son, the Honourable Brian Tracey, afterwards distinguished, in contradistinction to his father, as the *bad* Lord Ravenspur; whilst his name was ever coupled with a remark of wonderment that so good a man should have had so infamous a son.

Occupied in public affairs, the friend of many, the active patron of men of letters, the champion of the church, the pet of the court, Lord Ravenspur attended to everything except that which the most vitally concerned him—the moral education of his son. It was a blow, and perhaps a sharp pang, to him when he discovered, by the report of others, that young Tracey was among the most notorious of the rakes and spendthrifts of the day; and that already good men shunned, and even bad ones affected to condemn a man who far outstripped his contemporaries in the madness of his career.

Lord Ravenspur thought but of one remedy—marriage—a rich and reputable marriage. His own estates were not large; and he considered, looking not into the heart of his son, but pursuing the most expedient view of affairs, that a creditable connection, backed by interest, might not only restore his son to society, but curb those wild propensities which were not only injuring the consideration of the young man, but somewhat detracting from the high reputation of his father.

One day—the father and son had been long partially estranged—Mr. Tracey, whilst vegetating at Hasketon Hall, as he called it, received a summons from his father to attend him in his study. Mr. Tracey, polite to the last degree, and strictly dependent on Lord Ravenspur, instantly obeyed. The

door was opened, he stood before his father, and dutifully inquired what had procured him the honour of a message ?

"Sir," replied Lord Ravenspur, taking from his bookshelf a work of his own, "whilst I pass my leisure in researches such as these, your time has been misspent among actresses and gamesters. I need scarcely tell you how great is the sorrow to a father who has instilled into the mind of his son the seed of every virtue ; but I will not reproach you ; my family and name must be maintained ; you are my only surviving child. I recommend to your attention the subject of marriage."

"Marriage !" repeated Mr. Tracey, somewhat surprised ; "I have no objection : just as your lordship pleases. And whom do *you* prefer—that is, whom am *I* to prefer as the object of my choice ?"

"That," replied Lord Ravenspur, with a dignity that was contrasted with the levity of his son, "that must in some degree rest with yourself. Were I to advise, it would be a lady of such exemplary virtues, of such high purposes, and undoubted religious character—(the young man drew out his handkerchief to conceal a smile),—as might elevate *your* sentiments ; and, allow me to say (there is room for it), improve your practice."

"And who," inquired Mr. Tracey, with a deep respect of manner, "is the paragon to whom you would direct my view ?"

"A lady well known to you, I believe, by report—there are not many such, unhappily—Miss Purdillion. Her person is, to me at least, not disagreeable ; her mental acquirements are well known ; her fortune is not large, but will receive a considerable augmentation at the death of her cousin, who, as I chanced to see in the county paper, has had a paralytic stroke. Where is it ? among that bundle there, Brian ; give it to me. Yes, I am right ; 'Mr. Purdillion, of Biggleswade Park, we regret to say, has had a severe, &c. &c., but is likely to recover for the present.' *For the present ;* that is as well : there will be no impropriety in your calling to pay your respects, and to make your inquiries at Miss Purdillion's."

"But was not the lady one of whom, some time ago, your lordship entertained so high an opinion, that you really had thoughts of honouring her with the offer of your own hand ?" asked Mr. Tracey, his eyes fixed the while on the ground, and assuming the deepest humility and respect. "I should be loath, my lord, to interfere with the pretensions of my honoured father."

Lord Ravenspur's face was the hue of parchment ; deep lines were engraven thereon ; a slight play of feature, a tinge

of red just indicated that the observation was heard. But he answered quietly, "Not at all; be perfectly easy on that score: and good fortune attend you! You will do well to ride over to inquire how Miss Purdillion is; and to gain a more particular knowledge of circumstances, you can ask an interview, and inquire, on my account, into the state of the old gentleman."

"Have a care, sir," replied the young man, "lest the source of my solicitude be misunderstood, and lest all the while my attentions and civilities may be understood to be on my honoured father's account, and not on my own."

"It is all very well for those who are not in embarrassed circumstances," replied Lord Ravenspur, somewhat contemptuously, "to jest; but when such a pile of duns accumulates as that, pointing to a large mass of documents on the table, "docility and gravity would be more becoming. My advice to you is, to marry, and, for the rest, such poor means as are in my power, shall be employed to enable you to maintain your station. Farewell!" He extended a white thin hand to his son. Their fingers touched; and, with this recognition of a poor reconciliation, the reprobate son left the saintly father, and sought his parasite.

Harry Aylmer was a distant cousin of young Tracey; the same tutor had reared them, and, from infancy, the empire of fortune and rank had been asserted over the dependant. There had been a sort of mental tyranny over Aylmer. Vices foreign to his nature had been almost forced upon him, and he had loved his tyrant.

Passing hastily through the hall, Tracey went forth into the air, and ranged through the pleasure-ground.

Hasketon Hall, still considered as classic ground in virtue of its first lord who built it, is situated in a hollow, from which rise the green glades of a magnificent park, planted with trees in such heavy masses as almost to form too rich a woodland scene. The house is of stone, of Grecian architecture, and it has the merit of exhibiting one great design—no interpolations have been permitted. Yet, like most houses of that style and period, it is devoid of interest, except the interest of the perfect and poetical Lord Ravenspur.

The park is full of alcoves, and arbours, and statues, and inscriptions; and at the time when Brian Tracey dashed out into it, these were maintained in all their pedantic glory. Rapid in all things, Mr. Tracey almost flew over the green sward, until ascending a grass walk, contrived so as to command a view of rich country beyond, he gained a point whereon, *al fresco*, Aylmer and a young lady were seated. The

latter was in mourning—being a distant relation resident in the family from necessity. She was short, and thin, and plain; but a look of fixed dejection was rendered somewhat interesting by an air of ill health. As her cousin approached she raised not her eyes from the work which lay upon her lap, yet listened intently to all his conversation.

Tracey quickly disclosed what had occurred to him.

"And you consented?" said Aylmer, leaning against a tree, and fixing his eyes upon his cousin.

"To be sure! for what matters it whom one marries? And now I'm in a desperate haste to be gone, and to bring the matter to a conclusion. 'Twill be something to pass the time.

"'O ye woods and glades, how ye weary me!'"

"And you really mean to woo Miss Purdillion?" repeated Aylmer.

"Undoubtedly; or rather, the dead uncle." The work fell from the hands of the young lady near him as he spoke; but she resumed it after a momentary pause, and began mechanically to proceed with it.

"Then let us begone," said Aylmer; "I will hasten to order the horses."

He ran down towards the house as he spoke, whilst Tracey stood where he was. His eyes were directed to the individual beside him: hers were still fixed upon her work, but her trembling fingers, her tearful eyes, and the pale averted cheek told the tale. One might have supposed that Tracey, accustomed to the adulation of the beautiful and the gay, might have spared this one victim, so lowly, so ready a prey to his depravity. What was the degree of his guilt none ever knew. Her whole appearance spoke her sorrows.

At length Tracey spoke.

"Your work is done; why do you still hold it, Isabel? Suppose you walk with me to the house."

The young creature arose, but tottering, nearly fell against the tree, under the shade of which she had been sitting.

"Are you sorry to hear that I am to be married, Isabel?" asked her cousin, in a tone of interest.

She turned her eyes towards him, and an expression of anguish passed over her face.

"Then I am sorry, too; don't let us talk of it: it may not come to pass. Besides, Isabel——" he took her hand, it was withdrawn passionately. "Very well!" He walked on a few steps, then looked back, but the momentary feeling had passed

away; that face of woe, pale as it was, was as calm as usual. "She will not embroil me with my father, so it does not signify," said Tracey to himself, and he went towards the house.

Meantime Mrs. Howard, accompanied by Lilia, had preceded Mr. Tracey and his friend in their visit to Miss Purdillion. They had arrived on the morning of the same day, and had entered that sanctum, the red-brick dwelling-house of Miss Purdillion. The whitest gates opened at their approach, and the most weedless of gravel-walks led to the house. It was all on the small scale; for Miss Purdillion lived far beneath her income, which was apportioned out with system. A drawing-room on the one hand, and a dining-room from the other, led from the small hall up a small flight of steps; the lawn before the house was all stuck about with small fuchias and myrtles on small green stands. There were small seats, just large enough for two, about the place: and here and there small juniper bushes studded the verdure; and there was a small green-house, all full of small flower-pots and small watering-pots.

Miss Purdillion was, herself, a miniature of mortality, short and thin, with quaint features, a board-like figure, and a small mind. Added to which, she was *pious*. I mean no irreverence to that word, so pregnant with meaning, so beautiful in all its bearings, when thus I write it. But, when it is applied to raise one human being above another, to make religion a garb, or an ornament to our fleshly weaknesses, to puff up the weak with an impertinent sense of superiority, and to cast a tacit reproach upon the less pretending,—it is then scandalously misappropriated.

Miss Purdillion had lived in a little circle of relations, who, on account of some few dirty thousands, set up as a lighthouse among her poorer connections, worshipped her as a little queen; and she knew as little of the real truth of things as any queen. She never felt her own insignificance. Now, it is not a pleasant lesson to the mind, but if one just reflects what myriads of human beings have all the same sense of individuality, one may conceive how little one is. Such as she was, however, her virtues, in a naughty world, had shone forth resplendently. Her reputation, in days when women were either frivolous or dissipated, either played deep or chronicled small beer, was considerable.

She received her friends with a neat hospitality, but careful. "I am very glad to see you; very, very glad to see you!" but the pasteboard features never altered. Up rushed to her assistance a lady of middle age, with large dropping blue eyes, a neat active figure, and a remarkable power of calling up

enthusiasm at any moment. If Miss Purdillion was grave, Miss Hartley was in raptures at her wisdom. When the dear still little creature chose to be merry, chirping out like an automaton bird, Miss Hartley went round bustling to everybody, squeezing their hands, "Isn't she charming? Isn't dear Miss Purdillion delightful to-day?"

Cold manners are proverbially unpleasant; but there is a species of warm manners, that almost provokes one to inflict some personal injury upon people; that outrageous vehement show of affection, that it puts you into a fever to return—that *very* great familiarity and ecstatic delight, which many persons mistake for kindness, but which is only bad taste, are as unpleasant, to my mind, as a great roasting fire, which burns when you only want it to warm.

Miss Hartley's voice was heard officially in the hall before the ladies had descended from Mrs. Howard's neat chariot.

"Come in!—Pray come in! Don't you think it cold?—How cold it is!—How delightful to see you both looking so well! And you'll think our dear Miss Purdillion looking charmingly well, delightfully well: and she'll be so excessively happy to see you."

Presently the much-extolled lady made her appearance in her little hypocritical drab-coloured gown, which concealed as worldly a heart as ever beat—if hers did beat—under folds of satin, or even of gold tissue.

She was ostentatiously simple and coquettishly grave in her attire, and spoke sententiously things with no sort of grasp of mind in them, as if they were actions worthy of Solomon. Mrs. Howard, nevertheless, perfectly worshipped the shadow of her shoetie.

"Well, make yourselves at home—every one is at home here." She seated herself firmly on one of the chairs as she spoke, and held up her face; but, alas! the very air of the precious drawing-room was enough to make one not feel one's self at home. The very flowers, stuck up in little bunches in little flower-glasses, did not seem to feel themselves at home.

The little dinner soon followed, contrasting graciously in Mrs. Howard's congenial mind with the heavy hospitality, and fulsome plenty of Hastreton Manor. She looked at her friend with envy and a sigh; but Miss Hartley did not suffer any one to be quiet, even for an instant.

"You heard of our poor dear Mr. Purdillion's illness? Sad thing, poor man! I fancy he'll never get over it—though we must not say so to dear Miss Purdillion! He was her guardian, and she's very fond of him. That's his picture (raising her

voice) opposite, taken when he was looking *so* well! Quite himself! A delightful likeness, is it not?"

Lilia looked with every good intention of admiring on the portrait, but could see nothing very captivating in a blown-out red face, breathing apoplexy in every trait, and looking as if it would set the collar beneath it on fire.

"He was taken," resumed Miss Hartley, whose part it was to fill up the interregnum of this long, formal, little dinner (waited upon by a slow little footman), with conversation, "last Sunday, precisely at three." She sighed deeply, as she added, "the doctors at first gave us no hopes; and being, poor dear man! (her eyes glanced towards the picture) of a full habit, our fears prevailed: but our hopes," she continued, in a cheerful tone, "are now delightfully revived."

"We cannot look into futurity," said Miss Purdillion.

Mrs. Howard, struck by the depth and originality of the remark, shook her head sympathetically.

"One always learns from *her* conversation," observed Miss Hartley to Lilia.

"My dear friend," said Miss Purdillion, as the ladies arose from their chaste repast, unembittered by any recollections of intemperance either in eating or drinking, "I always admire your laces—they are pretty, they are very, very pretty! but would it not be better to devote the money which is expended upon those needless articles of luxury in some other way."

"How well she talks!" exclaimed Miss Hartley, aside.

"Why, indeed, yes," replied Mrs. Howard, in a subdued "very true;" "but I thought no harm in wearing this: it was my mother's."

"And, as such, a treasure indeed," returned Miss Purdillion, in a sonorous tone. "An orphan like me," and she shook her head mournfully, "left unprotected and exposed to many temptations, can but too deeply comprehend the value of any thing that has belonged to a mother."

Miss Hartley turned towards the window with the corner of her handkerchief to her eye. She put it down again before the supposed tear *could* have been dried, exclaiming, "Bless us all! Visitors coming up the lane and stopping here, I declare! See! see! Mrs. Howard, a gentleman with a laced-hat, and a nosegay in his button-hole, and York tan-gloves; and another! Both very handsome," she was going to say, but she turned round and caught Miss Purdillion's eye, and checked herself; "handsome, if good, I was going to add. They are coming this way."

"Be calm! be calm! exclaimed Miss Purdillion with a wave of the hand, and let us welcome them with such courtesy as

we travellers through a world of much temptation ought to show each other. I am rejoiced, my dear Mrs. Howard," she added, "that your matronly presence will give a sanction to our inexperience."

"Oh! my dear Miss Purdillion—Mrs. Howard was not a bright woman ;—don't say you require it."

Two outriders, in gay liveries, showed the rank of the guests; and looking prodigiously elegant, composed, and attractive, Mr. Tracey alighted, sent in his compliments and inquiries, and begged to pay his respects to Miss Purdillion.

Now, orders had been given at the door that Miss Purdillion was in two great a distress of mind, owing to the illness of her dear relative, Mr. Thomas Purdillion, to see visitors ; and, in general, in a part of the country where people only called once a year, that restriction might have been imposed with little chance of its being broken. In the agitation of the moment, it was not recalled, so the small servant, who had just taken down his dinner-tray, and whose feelings were somewhat excited by this unusual innovation of company, gruffly said, "You can't see Missus, sir—as how——"

"How so ? There are ladies at the window ?"

"Them be strange ladies! However, Maister Thomas was took ill last Sunday. He's a wonderful deal better now ; so may be you'd better come in."

The gentleman entered.

"We merely," said Mr. Tracey, "as he slid into the room, wished to offer our most neighbourly condolences."

He assumed the proper mourning face as he spoke. No introduction took place ; and Mr. Tracey never supposed that his father would suggest to him a lady of such mature age as Miss Purdillion and Mrs. Howard ; and not recollecting distinctly the appearance of Lilia, and misled, perhaps by his hopes, his wish being father to the thought, he mistook Lilia for the young heiress whom he was advised to solicit in marriage.

His quick eye instantly perused a face no less attractive from its beaming expression than from its loveliness, and his manner became very friendly—unusually so : not contented with touching the tips of her fingers, he raised them to his lips, and exclaimed, in rapture, "I am indeed fortunate—indeed happy to see you :" then lowering his voice to a tone of anxiety, he added, "But, dear madam, how is your cousin ?"

Miss Purdillion now bridled up, and entered the lists. "I perceive," she said, emphatically, "some mistake ; my unfortunate diffidence has prevented my claiming my due position as mistress of the house. *My* name is—Purdillion."

"Indeed!"

"Be seated, sir, I pray you, and your friend; you'll be undoubtedly happy, sir, to hear that my cousin Thomas is better, and that we are likely still (she spoke with a sweet smile) to have him restored. He is so remarkably patient! not a murmur! but submits, as we all must do, like an angel."

"Indeed!" returned Mr. Tracey; "very heroic, admirable! In these complaints," he added, glancing at Lilia, "there is generally so much depression of the strength, such confusion of mind, that people can't help themselves: they must be patient, I should suppose."

"Oh! but he is perfectly sensible," exclaimed Miss Purdillion; "quite sensible."

"His own dear self completely!" added Miss Hartley, breathlessly.

"Then," thought Tracey, "I have come too soon; for as for waiting, I could not. Nothing but an immediate relief could have induced me." But he said aloud, "Then I may give my lord cheering intelligence?" revolving in his own mind the resolution whether he would, or would not return again, and balancing, as he stood in the most respectful attitude possible, which of the two he could endure the most readily, the correct Miss Purdillion, or a certain fat widow of a city alderman, who had been the mark for some time for all landless lords and young spendthrifts to aim at.

"Certainly, you may assure him," replied Miss Purdillion, emphatically, "that my cousin Thomas may live for *years*."

"Delightful! is it not?" interposed Miss Hartley. "We shall have him among us a long time, I hope."

"The widow for ever!" thought Mr. Tracey.

"Yet he may," continued Miss Purdillion, in a plaintive tone, intended to go to the heart, "he may be taken off any day."

"*She* will do;" thought Mr. Tracey. "I have to express my warmest thanks," he said, pressing both her hands, "for a most instructive morning. Aylmer and I shall return all the better for this visit; and shall plead for a renewal of conversation *so* enlightening."

"Ah!" said Miss Hartley, feelingly, "that it is!"

"Yes," added slow Mrs. Howard, "we always learn something good in Miss Purdillion's company."

"You make me quite vain!" exclaimed the little heiress, standing, as if fixed by some internal machine, in the true upright, and her clothes pasted on her; "and vanity," she

added, with her accustomed shake of the head and wave of the hand, "we all know, brings vexation of spirit."

"How true!" exclaimed Miss Hartley, with an air of deep thought; and true did Miss Purdillion find it, to her sorrow.

The gentlemen road away; and the first thing Tracey did, after turning the corner of the lane, and finding himself out of sight of the house, was to rein in his horse, and indulge himself in a long hearty fit of laughter, in which Aylmer, to a great extent joined. This outbreak being over, they proceeded leisurely on their road home. Tracey, as he reviewed with some anxiety the state of his affairs, which had alone induced him to a quiet residence at Haskreton, came to the conclusion that the widow, with her two great sons, whom she could no longer call boys, though they had been in pinafores no one knew how long, would be, after all, more endurable than Miss Purdillion. As he came to this decision he arrived at the summit of a gentle acclivity, whence, rising amid the massive foliage peculiar to that part of the country where the Ravenspur estates were situated, rose the substantial chimneys of Biggleswade House, Rich farms in one direction, and a chase well stocked with game in the other, were objects on which the eye of Tracey, at once a spendthrift and a calculator, long rested.

"An attorney, was he not, Aylmer? Well, I should not object to get back some of the hundreds out of that craft, that they have robbed me of. She's thirty-five, I should think. Too young: the widow has the advantage there; but then Biggleswade joins Haskreton. Miss Purdillion is certainly very estimable—good to a fault; I've not the least doubt of it—one of those medicines of life that one must take down with a degree of trust and hope that I fear is not in *me*." They rode on a little way farther, "All must depend," said Tracey, "upon the old man's apoplexy; waiting would not suit the Jews who are looking towards the widow, with hope on my account, I know. I can't use my friends ill. Let us give up disagreeable subjects for the day—don't plague me about it Aylmer. Pray who was that fine girl that I mistook for the heiress?"

"Miss Lilia Howard. But there is no amusement to be had there; I *think* she likes Bernard Elphinstone."

"Bernard Elphinstone! how I detest that man, and the whole list of his virtues! which my father rehearses every day over his Madeira. But why do you think so?"

"Because she stammered and coloured so when I spoke of his law-suit which is coming on, and pretended she knew so little of him, though the whole county has given them to each other; and there was a clash of bitterness in her remarks;

nevertheless, she always got back to the same subject again—these Elphinstones—but only to declare that she admired the younger brother far more than the elder. Who believes her?"

"Bernard Elphinstone! if I thought that *he* had any views that way, if I thought that I *could* plague him, I would give ten years of my life, which indeed is not likely to be too long, to do it."

Harry Aylmer coloured, and was silent for a few moments, as he listened to that speech, and saw the workings of a face which he well knew how to read, for he was too intimately acquainted with his relation not to know that where revenge, as well as passion prompted, he was indefatigable in every evil work. Men of pleasure are not always the beings of impromptu they may seem. Deep were the purposes of Tracey, and unfathomable some of his designs. It was his utter selfishness, his malignity, his recklessness of human suffering, that afterwards, when the hey-day of youth had passed away, and *that* excuse failed, and when the impetuosity of the passions had declined, dashing as it were over the brink of a fall, and then settling into a muddy pool, that the real cruelty of that character had appeared, and that the epithet "bad" was applied to him, from the combination of deep and outraged feelings.

"I'm not sure, remember," said Aylmer, after a long pause; "mine is only a guess."

"But you gave excellent reasons for your guess: pretended ignorance, assumed bitterness, a preference for the plain younger brother,—these are women's ways," returned Tracey, with a smile.

"But," argued Aylmer, his cheek glowing as he spoke, "this is a young lady of most reputable family; your father's own tenants; you cannot act to *her* as you have done to others. She will not be betrayed into indiscretions. She is modest, if there be modesty in woman; proud too, and no fool; for her beauty," he added, with much feeling, "is worthy of a better fate than to be your plaything."

"I thank you," returned Tracey, loftily, "for the compliment, but I take my own way. You suppose I mean to insult the young lady; but I never yet saw the woman that I could not win, if I chose it. I may not think it worth my while."

"Ah!" cried Aylmer, his natural feelings getting the better of his dissolute tastes; "it is worth *any* man's while. Happy, and too proud, will be the man that wins her." He urged on his horse as he spoke, and relieved the honourable emotion that so rarely gleamed across his vicious path in life, by riding

on a full gallop. Tracey lingered, "Aylmer too!" he said to himself, and the smile which indicated *so much* passed over his face.

CHAPTER V.

A REALLY RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

Happy is ignorance! happy was the ignorance of Lilia! not alone of schemes which were mooted against her peace, but in her unconsciousness that the secret of her heart, disguised from itself, was divined, and that the coarse observations of men, such as Aylmer and Tracey, had been directed towards that ever-painful and smothered feeling. Thus slept she calmly beneath the four-post canopy of Miss Purdillion's second-best bed; valanced and draped with as dim and mournful a chintz as the genius of propriety could select. Lilia had, it is true, cherished certain hopes to which an uncomfortable home had given an occasional earnestness.

There were moments when Lilia had sighed for a home more congenial to her gentle temper than that of her father; and her only regrets, she always felt, in marriage, would be the separation from her sister and brother. When, therefore, Bernard Elphinstone paid her those attentions which, without the opportunity of great intimacy, were sufficient to raise a speculation in the minds of friends, Lilia had felt that all that her heart could ever desire was centered in one so excellent, so admired, so admirable. Such had been her feelings—such her hopes—but perhaps she had never felt the truth and depth of her regard for Mr. Elphinstone until all seemed suddenly, unaccountably, broken off, as far as his attentions went, between them.

Lilia anticipated not only a relief in change of scene, therefore, in visiting Miss Purdillion, but she hoped for a real pleasure. About a mile from Miss Purdillion's house lived her friend, Alice Hope, under whose roof Lilia had first met Bernard Elphinstone. The day after her arrival at the Larches, the modest name of Miss Purdillion's abode, Lilia resolved, therefore, to walk across the fields to Hopewood, the name of the village where her friend lived with her brother, who was the clergyman of the place.

Eleven o'clock arrived before she set out. First, there had been Miss Hartley's congratulations upon having slept well;

then Miss Purdillion's prim inquiries; then the sound of the little silver tea-urn was heard; then the little tea-chest was brought in, followed by some delicate slices of bread and butter, and some constitutional dry toast; then there were Miss Hartley's raptures at Miss Purdillion's good looks and ecstatics: these might be insincere or they might not, for it was difficult to know whether Miss Hartley's enthusiasm had not grown into a mental habit, and become, from the force of repetition, real; or, from frequent practice, like the soldier's drill, a sort of second nature. Death, which solves so many problems,—the death of her patroness, and a legacy, that capital chemical test of the affections, could alone settle that question.

Miss Hartley hovered so about the doors, that Lilia much feared she was going with her. "So you really have your clogs on!—now, can't I help you? How can you endure walking alone? We never do it; but then, living two together, young women, we are obliged to be particular; and really my cousin does set such an example! Did you not think that cap became her to day beautifully?"

Lilia smiled, kissed her hand, and dashing down the shrubbery, congratulated herself on her escape from a certain green chariot, which she saw in preparation at the coach-house for a drive. The freedom of the air, which she felt was impeded even among Miss Purdillion's laurustinuses, the emancipation from that pious imposition herself, and the hope of seeing her friends, quickened her pace, and brought a sensation of extreme pleasure to her heart.

"After all," she said to herself, "with such friends as the Hopes, why should I wish for other people's regard? *They* love me so much; oh! that I could ever show to them how very warmly it is returned."

Her friends lived at the parsonage-house. The living of Hopewood was Mr. Hope's own property, and a considerable estate adjoining belonged to him. He was a scholar and a bachelor, of retired habits; but his sister, Alice Hope, was almost as popular a character in the county as the county member himself. It was a low browed ancient house, that parsonage; the front, in summer, covered with passion-flowers and roses, and with the rich-leaved magnolia. Close by was the church, the enclosure round which joined the parsonage garden, having only a slight wire fence between. It stood on a height, and beneath, at the foot of a grassy eminence, flowed a tranquil stream, circling till it turned a water-mill, and then passing in a broader expanse through a rich park, Hopewood. The seat which bore that name was plainly visible from the

parsonage. It was—I should say is—for still exists that same scene, unaltered, in all its peaceful charms, an old Elizabethan house, perfect in character, and boasting a detached gateway, that species of entrance having been given up in the reign of James the First. Huge trees, chiefly oaks, spread their branches over green slopes, which were tenanted by deer. This enviable abode, too large for Mr. Hope's fortune to maintain, had been let to Mr. Bernard Elphinstone and his brother, who, pending their minority, had taken it from its proprietor; but such was the arrangement, that Mr. Hope still kept the management of the greatest part of the manor in his own hands.

Lilia knew every inch of the churchyard—every grassy tomb—every epitaph, where they were almost cheerful objects. She opened the little gate of the garden, and made her way into the house. The drawing-room door was wide open, and she went in and rang the bell, to apprise the inhabitants of the rectory that she was there. How pleasant and sunny was that room! how stored with everything that could innocently while away the time and enrich the taste! Among its ornaments was a slight pencil drawing of Mr. Hope. He was delineated in his simple clerical dress, leaning back in his chair; but the face—how it fastened itself on the imagination—thoughtful, pensive, but sweet! how it spoke of the scholar and the divine!—the deep-sunk eyes; the mouth, around which some lines of care, even in *his* peaceful lot, were visible; the fine broad forehead, and the bending slight figure, already characterised by middle age, were all harmonised by a prevailing expression of benignity and intellect.

Miss Hope's voice was soon heard in the passage, and not heard without a tremor, for she was prevailing on some person to accompany her. "Now, do come in! we will not detain you one moment; and I know I am pretty sure that my brother wants to see you."

She entered the room with her wonted quietness as she spoke, and by her side was Bernard Elphinstone. He had sauntered up thus early from the hall, and in his straw hat, his careless, loose collar, and his shooting-jacket, looked even handsomer than when Lilia had danced with him at the county balls.

"Here is Lilia!" said Miss Hope: "why, I thought you two knew each other," she added, seeing a very cool recognition take place.

"I am glad you are come, Lilia, for I want some lady to go down with me to the house; and the world is so censorious that I dare not go alone with my good neighbour here. You

will be an admirable chaperon. She will do ; will she not, Mr. Elphinstone ?"

"I am afraid," said Lilia, gravely, "I must return."

"You're only just come ; however, if you will return, you can go round that way. It does not make above half a mile's difference, does it, Mr. Elphinstone ?"

"I shall be most happy," Bernard began, looking away from Lilia.

"We don't doubt it," said Miss Hope ; "we are thinking of our own happiness, not of yours. Come, Lilia, untie your bonnet. And do you and Mr. Elphinstone seal these letters for me, while you wait, as you must do, five minutes." As she ended she fled from the room ; but, looking back, said, "Don't be miserable ; I shall not be gone five minutes—or it may be ten."

They thus were left alone together—not purposely, for Miss Hope knew not what was passing in either heart.

Her five minutes proved to be ten ; and during that space not a syllable passed between Bernard and Lilia. He was by far the most embarrassed of the two. *She* was composed, and dignified, and angry—angry at this fresh proof of indifference and marked rudeness, as now she began to consider it.

"I am cured," she said to herself, "if ever I required a cure."

"I hope you have not missed me ?" said Miss Hope, returning. "Lilia, who can tell me, can you, if Lord Ravenspur is still at Haskreton ? I have just been writing to him and to Tracey, to ask them to dine here on Saturday. Mr. Elphinstone, I do not ask you to meet them, as I understand some coolness ——— With regard to the reports against Mr. Tracey, I do not credit one word of them. And if there were some few blemishes in *such* a man, endowed with such high genius, such wit and fancy, one ought to pardon and to sorrow, not to shun."

Ere she spoke she had stepped out into the garden, and was passing, at that moment, a half-opened window, whence issued these words,—

"A dangerous doctrine that, Alice."

"I felt sure you would say so," replied Miss Hope, addressing her brother, who was sitting at his desk writing, and who had not risen even to speak. "Are you coming with us ?"

"Not *with* you ; but, if you are going round by the house, I will meet you, and have the pleasure of rowing Lilia back to her home."

As Mr. Hope spoke he looked towards Lilia, and a sweet kind smile played upon his thoughtful countenance.

Lilia felt towards him such a mingled reverence and affection that, as she returned the look, her eyes were almost moistened by tears.

It was now noon, and the village, as Miss Hope and her companions walked through it, was in that state of profound silence which denoted that the cottagers were at their simple dinners. Never did the general aspect of a place denote more plainly the effects of care, example, and bounty, than the village of Hopewood. No litter in the road, no offensive and demoralising, *because* offensive, objects met the eye, polluting the taste and habits of the poor; pigstyes were kept in the background, and roses and honeysuckles, and the little neat gardens of the peasantry, the marigold and the stock predominant, met the gaze of the passenger. Interiorly, clean, well-ventilated rooms, bright fire-irons, and some small show of china cups, little pictures framed and glazed, and good fires objects apparently unimportant—spoke of that care which proceeds from the settled feeling of a prosperous career, be it in the busy and successful scenes of mercantile life, or in the lowly chambers by the wayside.

Meantime, Mr. Tracey and his shadow had paid another visit to the Larches. Every one was from home ; and, upon gaining the intelligence whither Lilia had gone, these two gentlemen rode quickly after her to Hopewood, and overtook Miss Hope, Mr. Elphinstone, and the object of their admiration, just as they were turning from the village into the park.

As they alighted from their horses, to join the ladies, Lilia could not help casting a glance at Elphinstone. Reports of his abhorrence of Tracey had reached her. She saw his face suffuse deeply as he returned the salutation of that individual ; and, strange to say, a long and searching look was directed to herself. Lilia, simple as she was, was a daughter of Eve. The resource of a slighter woman occurred to her, and the temptation was irresistible.

Between Miss Hope and Tracey a very ardent Platonic had existed for years. It becomes not me to decide, what the neighbourhood of the parties could never decide, how far went the ardour and where stopped the Platonics. I know not a more difficult process than to determine where liking melts into love. To any public profession of regard there were, however, obstacles which shall hereafter be stated. For the present, it is sufficient to say that a true, natural, honest enthusiasm reigned in *one* heart ; and that the intercourse between the friends was gay, unembarrassed, and agreeable to both.

"You cannot go in; this is Elphinstone's park," whispered Aylmer to Tracey, as they passed into an avenue.

"I will, if only to annoy *him*," returned Tracey.

So he walked on, and the intrusion passed off without awkwardness, because Alice talked almost unceasingly, and alluded, ever and anon, with a marked emphasis, to her brother as the owner of the woodland demesne in which they were now walking. She had reputation for having a way of her own, and, of course, the cowardly world submitted.

"This dear old place has never had a brick added to it," she said, as she walked on, "nor anything taken down since our great-grandfather's time: even the dove cot and the stable, you see, are in the same awkward place on the outside of the house. I love a dove-cot! And pray what makes our host so silent to-day?" she broke off, suddenly.

Elphinstone started; he was pacing along, and his eyes were fixed on the ground, but his ears were open to the raillery which had been going on between Tracey and Lilia; and his disapproval and dislike of the former,—sentiments in which many persons concurred with him,—were fostering into hate.

"I know," whispered Miss Hope to him, slightly colouring, and somewhat haughtily, "that my brother will be hurt if *his* friend and mine be not asked into the house."

She spoke in that language of decision which few resist.

"As *your* friend," replied Elphinstone, "I will, of course.' He cast a dark look at Tracey, waited a few moments before he could conquer his repugnance to speak, and then said, "I hope I shall have the honour of showing you the house—*my* house I cannot call it."

Mr. Tracey bowed carelessly as he answered, "I thank you, but cannot intrude on your hospitality. Miss Howard is going to show me a fine prospect round there," and he pointed to the knoll above the house.

Bernard was thrown off his guard. "Then will not you," he said, addressing Lilia, "come in?"

"I am pledged to Mr. Tracey."

"Well, then," said Miss Hope, "I think I am pledged to Mr. Tracey, too. I will come down to-morrow, Mr. Elphinstone, and see the pictures that you wish to show me; and, really, we ought not to take up more of your time."

Poor Bernard, who had little to do the livelong day, after hesitating a moment, could not resist going on with the rest of the party, though the presence of Tracey was wormwood to him, and though he had formed resolutions concerning Lilia which were fixed as fate: though the flirtation, for he could

call it nothing else, now rising to a climax, drove him nearly crazy, he still went on, his peace of mind suffering more and more at every step he took.

The party now crossed the pleasure-grounds to the south of the house; and passing by quaint devices of yew-trees and statues on pedestals, casting their shadows on the verdant turf, they ascended a terrace, and pacing a broad walk which led from it, soon entered thick woods, through which a pathway led to the hill they proposed to ascend.

"This is deliciously cool! And have you not extended this path in another direction? I heard that the forester was at work upon it, cutting down branches," said Miss Hope to Bernard.

"I really don't know; I forget," he answered, with an absent air, for Lilia was now leaning on Mr. Tracey's arm.

Alice looked at him, and thought what injustice he does himself; and that dark path, overhung by massive beeches, was trodden by her in silence.

As the party proceeded, they encountered, descending from the height, a young man who was coming down. The dark eye, and a certain family resemblance, announced even to Tracey and Aylmer, who knew him not, the younger brother of Bernard. He was, however, of a very different character and appearance to the generous, open-hearted Elphinstone. His head and features were large; but Nature seemed to have stopped short in her intention of making him a tall man. His brow, his whiskers, his voice, all denoted "six foot;" but his figure contradicted that indication. His countenance was shrewdly expressive, unpleasantly so, for it had not the attributes of youth. If not crafty, it was, at all events, close—close and sarcastic, too—and led one to suppose its possessor to be endowed with that unpleasant propensity of keeping his own thoughts to himself, and penetrating those of other people. And that index erred not. Sholto, so was he named, was scarcely twenty; yet he had as bad an opinion of the world as if he were fifty. And if he had been moody, if he had even been ill-tempered, one could have borne him; but he had a fashion of being smilingly ill-natured, and jocularly suspicious.

He met Lilia and Mr. Tracey first, and before he had observed the rest of the party; and the manner in which he surveyed them, the look with which his eyes beamed scandal, was very characteristic of one who began the world in a manner in which most men leave it. He descended a few paces, and stood talking to Miss Hope and to his brother for some moments; and the glance which he gave his brother,

and then the gaze behind him, had their effect. Bernard began to be irritable.

"I wish Williams would clear this pathway," he observed, kicking away a stone with a violent impetus, as Sholto passed on towards the house. "It's impossible to get any one" (he dashed at the nettles with his cane) "to do any thing one wishes."

"Hey day!" said Alice, "what's the matter? I shall overtake Tracey and Lilia, for it seems to me, Mr. Elphinstone, that exercise does not agree well with you to-day." She walked gaily on, looking like the Queen of the Woods, ascending that acclivity with the elastic grace of one whose frame was strong as her intellect—both, perhaps, too strong for interest.

As Alice emerged into the highway road she found Lilia still leaning on Tracey's arm, admiring the view; but, winding up the hill, was an object by no means so agreeable as the champaign country, the village spires, and flowing river of the prospect. This object was a small, plain, green chariot, drawn by two slow fat horses, ridden by a post-boy who seemed to be on the temperance system. Tracey was just making Lilia comprehend which was the direction of Haskreton, when the vehicle drove up to the spot where he stood, and made an ominous stop. Lilia's heart misgave her, for, with every window up, in poke bonnets and thick veils, taking the air, were Miss Purdillion, Mrs. Howard, and Miss Hartley.

One window was solemnly let down, and then an object, which one guessed to be a face, surmounted by a dark brown bonnet, and the veil descending to the nose, was projected. Lilia reluctantly disengaged herself from Tracey, and drew near.

"It is you, is it?" said Miss Hartley. "Oh! so it really is you? We are very, very sadly within. Don't speak loud. We have just been to Biggleswade to inquire after Mr. P., who has had another stroke. Shocking! is it not? You'll not fail (in a whisper) to be home in time for dinner; Miss Purdillion is particular."

Mr. Tracey came up at this moment. When he heard of Mr. Purdillion's fresh attack, certain reminiscences of letters, requiring instant answers, received that morning, recurred to him. He moved round to that side of the carriage wherein the lady sat, and made a bow to engage her attention.

After a little agitation within, a slight consultation with Mrs. Howard as to the proprieties of the thing, the window was slowly let down, and a quarter of the face of the heiress-expectant was disclosed to the world.

"I am sorry," said Tracey, his features composing themselves

with wonderful despatch into a sort of half-mourning, "to hear these very, very bad news. But his mind is composed, and all that——*that* is right."

Miss Purdillion clasped her neat white gloves together. "I am most thankful that he has not a worldly affair to disturb him at this moment from what, as you remark, is, and to my mind has ever been, the most important——"

"How very true, indeed! and his earthly cares are, as you observe—they're over? And, of course, he is not now in a condition to be disturbed on that point."

"In plain terms," thought Tracey, "he has made his will. But," he resumed aloud, "that's a great comfort—I mean, a great consolation—that his last hours may be so tranquil. Is it likely to be a *very* easy—speedy release?"

Miss Purdillion put the handkerchief to her eyes. Miss Hartley leaned forward and answered, "We don't know that; there may still be hopes, poor dear man! of his rallying; he has a wonderful constitution!"

Mr. Tracey drew back a few steps from the carriage; but Mrs. Howard, who seldom spoke, put *her* head out, and called out in a tone of decision, "It's very unlikely—it's very, very unlikely—he can't last long."

Mr. Tracey put his hand on the carriage-door.

"You will permit me to call to-morrow?" he said, in his sweetest tone, to Miss Purdillion. She condescendingly put up her veil—the *very* observing might have noticed that she had a curl or two extra to-day (though still the same flat, little brown tresses appeared, as if they were stamped; but the general appearance, that of sanctimony and retiring propriety, prevailed.

"Indeed, *indeed*, I shall be most happy! If *I* am not in spirits to see you——"

"Ah!" interrupted Mr. Tracey, holding the little claw of a hand which she extended, "don't say so."

Miss Purdillion drew down her veil a little. "Never is friendship so much needed," she said, "as when we are in affliction."

"Ah, that's so true!" echoed Miss Hartley. Mrs. Howard shook her head by way of an assent, in a manner more expressive than words.

The scene was too exciting to last long, and Miss Hartley was seen looking out of the window, and desiring the coachman to turn back, as there was a turnpike farther on. The windows were then drawn up, and the veils put down, and the lively journey recommenced.

Lilia had been standing alone all this time, experiencing,

though unconsciously, the truth that portionless girls must learn, that no charms are like those which broad acres inspire. She, however, enjoyed the repose and the opportunity of casting some sidelong glances to see how Elphinstone comported himself.

He had recovered by that time a lofty calmness, and in that mood continued, until, having walked to the spot where Mr. Hope had promised to be ready with a boat to meet Lilia, and row her back to the Larches, he took a cold leave.

Here Alice, too, bade Lilia good morning. Then Tracey and Aylmer mounted their horses; and Mr. Hope began, after wrapping a large cloak round Lilia, to ply his oars.

CHAPTER VI.

SUSPENSE.

Mr. Hope had all the conversation to himself; for Lilia, tired and vexed, leaned back against a cushioned seat, her eyes fixed upon the clear, deep water, and on those beautiful weeds which looked so wonderful and so verdant beneath the surface of the waves; and thus she in deep silence, and he in the calmness of what was to him a gentle recreation rather than a toil, passed tranquilly down the stream. Their course was for some time only interrupted now and then by Mr. Hope's efforts to catch the water-lilies as he passed them. Soon the boat neared the immediate precincts of Hopewood House.

How beautiful and varied was the sedgy shore! above which rose the gabled house and the twisted chimneys; whilst, in the glades, the deer were seen herding in the shade. Clear and deep was the stream, reflecting back sprays of the myosotis and tall spikes of reeds; whilst the persicaria gave a brighter hue to the cold hues of the bank. The village church was now opened to the view, now overshadowed by the spreading oaks, whose leaves, not faded but changed, and boasting a far warmer and brighter tinge than in summer, fell upon the waters. On the terrace, before the house, the figures of the two brothers were seen pacing to and fro; they were in earnest conversation, Sholto being, indeed, the chief talker, for Bernard was downcast, and only spoke at intervals. They noticed not the boat hidden beneath the withies, and plying its gentle course with little noise. Both Mr. Hope's gaze and that of

Lilia was fixed on them, but they saw it not. A slight sigh, when they were lost to view, broke from Lilia; she looked at her companion, and was struck by the thoughtfulness of his countenance—it was unusually grave.

"Poor Bernard! I hope all is right *there*," he said, as if speaking to himself; then, meeting Lilia's eyes, he checked himself, and added, "he will have a far finer place than Hopewood, if he—I mean when he—takes possession."

"Is he not of age?" asked Lilia, impelled by an uncontrollable curiosity.

"Yes!" returned Mr. Hope, with an expression of mingled concern and surprise; "yes, he has served himself heir, so they call it in Scotland, to the Elphinstone estates, some months ago. How fine that beech is!" he added, evidently wishing to turn the conversation, but falling into a reverie before the reply was uttered.

Lilia was greatly puzzled: "What can he mean?" she thought; but she could not ask. "Oh! if he were but poor!" was her secret exclamation—"then—then—and what then? he does not care about me, so even the most disinterested affection would be of no avail."

Mr. Hope observed to his sister, on his return home, that he had never known Lilia so silent and absent: and she, on her part, observed that she had never found him so grave. Both were, perhaps, burning to disclose to some kind heart, feelings that oppressed them; yet both sought to disguise from the other every secret cause of melancholy.

"You are not offended with me?" asked Lilia, as she got out of the boat; "you have not spoken to me this half hour."

"I was thinking," returned Mr. Hope, "that I must have made some observation that displeased *you*, for I spoke to you three times, and you did not answer me."

"Did I not? I was watching the oars, and listening to the plash of the water."

"And I was so occupied in rowing," returned Mr. Hope.

As Mr. Hope handed Lilia out of the boat, at the foot of Miss Purdillion's garden, he was struck by her flushed cheek and absent manner. His preference for Lilia was that of benignity, mingled with the gallantry which so polished a being was sure to entertain for a young, fair lady; and if any warmer sentiment prevailed, it was surmounted by one high principle, which, whilst it kept the most amiable of his sex apart from the sympathies of conjugal life, elevated him above the thoughtless and the selfish.

When Lilia trod the neat oil-cloth in the hall, voices un-

wonted—the voices of two gentlemen—were heard in the drawing-room. She was escaping to her bed-room, when the door was opened by a lanky, drooping youth, a cousin of Miss Purdillion's, who had come over, like another carrion-crow, in expectation of the death.

"Come in," said the young gentleman, who was originally of Irish extraction, but naturalised in England. "My cousin, Morgaret, expects you. Have you been out in the pork?"—indicating by that some few fields near Miss Purdillion's house.

He was very pertinaceous, but Lilia, emancipating herself, went to her own room, and did not appear below until summoned by the dinner-bell.

The party were then all ready to take wing for the dining room, and another arrival had taken place in the shape of Mr. Rosam, who, having begun life as a young poet, was still a young poet at that time of day, and was introduced as such to society in general. He was in the rich, dark, Spanish, or Moorish style, except as to figure, which was short. His hair was worn, in despite of the fashion of the day, long and flowing, and parted off his—as by a figure of speech it was called—fine forehead on one side, His eyes were the delight of all the literary tea-tables, and his speech was sonorous, his phrases measured. His dress was in the most modern style, with a dash of that originality of idea which became a poet. He could not dress in prose—his waistcoats were *à la pastorale*, and his trousers *au brigand*. There was an ineffable consciousness in every movement, that never allowed one for an instant to forget that he was indeed a poet. Some people felt inclined to walk out of the room when he came in, for no other reason than his most inordinate conceit; just as if one had any right to be offended with other people's good opinion of themselves.

Mr. Rosam was pacing off with Miss Hartley, who was in ecstasies.

"Have you ever seen the young poet?" she whispered to Lilia.

"No."

"Then you've a treat to come. That's dear Miss Purdillion's own cousin, Matthew, who is leading her out! and although, at this afflicting time——"

Here she was reminded by Mr. Rosam, in a quotation, that "there was fear lest dinner cool."

The dinner was one scene of admirations. Miss Hartley sat admiring Miss Purdillion, and Miss Purdillion was admiring Mr. Rosam; "for," as she said, "nothing in the world was so interesting to her as a poet; especially (she smiled sweetly

on Mr. Rosam as she said it) when the lyre was attuned, as Mr. Rosam's was, she understood, to the highest of all subjects;" and Mr. Rosam looked down, went on eating his dinner, and said, with a slight lisp, "Certainly." For Mr. Rosam, like others in a similar predicament, was so tired of being lionised, that he now affected, save in the article of hair, the sardonic man of the world, who disclaimed romance, and said smart things.

Mr. Matthew Purdillion sat admiring his friend, Frederick Rosam, whom he had brought with him from "Bawth," where Mr. Matthew Purdillion, having no particular calling, "passed a good deal of his time." The poet, it was understood, had, to use his own phrase, "no local habitation," but was generally so fostered and cherished that, not being able to divide himself, he made, at least, a score of enemies every month. Having announced this, he fell to, and ate a remarkably good dinner.

Miss Purdillion was charmed with Mr. Rosam, and had not had so pleasant a dinner for a long time; and though, after the fashion of poets, he made a considerable reduction in the contents of the little, narrow-necked decanters, she still thought him, with a sigh, very, very charming! and if unseen spirits looked down at that moment, they must have thought Mr. Tracey's chance of Biggleswade lessening perceptibly.

"I'm such an admirer of genius!" she exclaimed, as the ladies stood round the fire in the drawing-room; and Mrs. Howard observed, "I understand it's quite the fashion now."

Miss Hartley was gazing upon her friend. "Does not that gown become her?" she asked Lilia, as if involuntarily: then added, "Yes, indeed; such society as one meets at Miss Purdillion's house one sees nowhere else; and this, indeed, is a true poet."

"Oh!" said Miss Purdillion, emphatically, "there can be no doubt of that! Such inspiration! and every word he utters is a pearl—a gem! Ladies," she added, checking herself, as if her talk was becoming too worldly, and too lively, "has anybody seen my Hervey's 'Meditations among the Tombs' about? Alas!" she exclaimed, looking down upon the little brown and blue carpet, "too, too appropriate to my feelings!"

She was interrupted by the tea-tray and the little china cups, and the mouthful of bread and butter, and the drops of coffee—all consistent with the high reputation of Miss Purdillion, which enabled her to do shabby things, and pass them off as virtues: nothing is so economical as a high reputation.

The evening passed in what Miss Purdillion called, forgetting herself for once, a terrestrial elysium; and even Matthew

thought it went off "remarkably short." For Mr. Rosam, though he could not be prevailed upon to quote his own poetry, improvised upon the fire-tongs, made a rhapsody on the screens, and, as Miss Purdillion observed, "shed a halo round every thing." And he gave them the most graphic descriptions, in the form of an autobiography, of parties at Lord D.'s and Lady P.'s, from which it appeared wonderful that he could ever sit down with a commoner.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLIMAX OF AFFAIRS.

Thus Mr. Rosam contributed to pass in cheerfulness the ordeal of suspense; for, during the ensuing fortnight, little material change took place in the condition of Mr. Purdillion. If "the young poet" happened to be serious, he was romantic and interesting; when he chose to be merry, he was "too delightful." Even his little lisp was an advantage in the eyes of the admiring fair ones. Miss Purdillion said, that it lessened the too great brilliancy of his wit; and Miss Hartley, of course, thought she "should not like him without it."

Meanwhile Tracey was playing a deep game, his avowed object being the heiress and her fortune; his secret one, known only to Aylmer, the heart of Lilia. "If I can but annoy that man!" he exclaimed, as they rode up, one bright morning, to Miss Purdillion's door.

It had always been a puzzle to Mr. Matthew Purdillion's friends to know "what use he was of in the world;" for, if he had a distinguishing trait, it was incapacity. He had been found too simple for business, too inert even for pleasure, too illiterate for the church, too timid for the army, too delicate for the navy, too susceptible for medicine, and too stupid for the bar. That he had his vocation in life was soon however evident,—it was a sort of stop-gap calling; he was the man who invariably came in at the wrong, or it might be, the right moment, and frustrated a *tête-à-tête;* he was the man who sat longer than anybody else at a morning call, in which there was no way of getting rid of him, except by pertinaciously standing up (if you sat down you were lost).

Mr. Matthew, as Miss Hartley sweetly called him, had much of the spaniel in him; he was impervious to rebuffs, and to

those doomed sufferers who had the misfortune of his acquaintance, he was distressingly faithful; when he once attached himself, like the polypi on a rock, he stuck for ever.

He became Lilia's shadow; when she walked, he walked; when she sang, he sang; when she went to church, he went to church. Her existence was no longer her own, and his art of conversation was such, that perpetually small nothings were breathed into her ear, vexing the air and exacting the faint courtesy of a reply to no earthly purpose.

Yet there *was* a purpose. It became in vain for Mr. Tracey to seek for opportunities of gallantry—Matthew was never known to leave the room; in vain the bouquet given—Matthew instantly gave another; in vain the attempted whisper of flirtation at the piano—Matthew whispered on the other side. And then such, and so continual were the devotions of the gentle Matthew, that to Miss Purdillion and her two friends looking on it seemed that something must come of it, and each felicitated the other that beings so made for each other ("and my cousin Matthew," Miss Purdillion said, "certain to have a great accession of property on the death of my cousin Thomas,") should have such opportunities of becoming better acquainted. Mrs. Howard prolonged her visit in consequence.

One day Lilia was walking out, when Mr. Tracey and Mr. Aylmer overtook her; of course, Mr. Matthew lingered by her side, making such bright remarks as to observe that the days drew in short now; that the parks were strewed with leaves; that autumn was a very different season to spring; and when the winter came they should find it cold. Then imagination lent her aid to his lucubrations; he supposed his cousin Margaret would not dislike being rich more than other people; and he supposed Miss Hartley would be married if she could; for his part, he liked younger ladies. In the midst of this remarkable conversation, and just as Matthew had started the intricate question, whether Miss Howard liked the country best, or town best, up rode the two gay horsemen.

It was impossible not to receive them, at such a moment, with pleasure; it were more than human for Lilia not to give in to a tacit arrangement that Aylmer should be encumbered with Mr. Matthew Purdillion,—the relief was too great, as if a series of fretting, foolish dreams were suddenly closed, and existence released from a spell.

"But I beg pardon; perhaps I am disturbing something interesting," said Mr. Tracey, as he followed Lilia's footsteps through the paths of a large common, her favourite walk.

"How can you say so? It is nothing but his extreme good nature that makes my late companion endurable."

"Still, I have to apologise: with so favourable an opinion of Mr. Purdillion as you have, there must be a certain enjoyment in conversation so serene as his. You admit it?"

"Indeed, I do not: but think so if you will."

"You are not, then," said Tracey, looking steadfastly on her face, "alarmed or annoyed at reports? However, they may vex or agitate the minds of your friends?" he added, with a faltering voice, and some apparent emotion.

Lilia hesitated for a moment.

"I do not know," she said, "that my friends have had any reason to be agitated on that account? There are few young people in this neighbourhood, and therefore reports, which, I suppose, must attach to some one, will naturally be spread even about me."

"Yet, when they fix long and steadily upon one individual?" said Tracey. "Not to distress you, have I your authority for contradicting them?—eh?"

"Indeed you have. And pray, Mr. Tracey, let us change the subject."

"Of one I have heard with concern—I will not mention names—but his cold heart and his arrogance make him odious to me, and I cannot but view with regret——"

"Pray say nothing more on this subject."

"I am alluding to Mr. Elphinstone—pardon me, if I offend,—and it is only to say, I grant his good qualities; but I am certain that self-interest and his frigid Scottish nature wholly unfit him for a place in any *warm* heart. Have I offended you?"

"No—because Mr. Elphinstone has never been to me more than what he now is,—an agreeable acquaintance: but I respect his character."

"You?" said Mr. Tracey, looking at her with marked admiration in his countenance; "*you* should have soul, fancy, unbounded generosity, and enthusiasm, not the icy, calculating descendant—if he be a descendant—of a race of Scottish barbarians."

Lilia replied not; her eyes now looked with an abstracted air over a vast expanse of heather, varied by knolls of gorse. In bold landscape beyond, relieved beautifully by this rich foreground, stood among mantling woods the old house of Hopewood.

At this moment two persons—sportsmen, of course—passed very near her. "But," hastily observed Lord Ravenspur, "their dogs are close by; they must have passed this way, and we were in such earnest conversation that we did not see them."

"Let us turn down another path," said Lilia, colouring very deeply, and becoming all at once thoughtful and serious; so much so, that she almost started when Tracey resumed:

"My sentiments towards Mr. Elphinstone may be somewhat marked by—what shall I call it, envy?—I envy him his freedom to follow the bent of his affections, if I envy him not his most cramped heart. *He* is happy." He watched attentively the downcast Lilia as he spoke; a short, broken sigh burst from her. "She loves him!" was Tracey's secret ejaculation, "and I am thwarted of my revenge: but I will have it *some* way!"

With these feelings, so worthy of the bad mind from which they originated, were coupled emotions which could not be described by the term love, but which were incidental to any one engaged in one particular scheme or pursuit, in which the object aimed at acquires a factitious value.

Meantime, Bernard Elphinstone and his brother, who had been coursing, viewed from a mound surmounted by a group of pines the party, now divided into pairs. Sholto was bitter in his remarks.

"Yes; I have no doubt it is the fair Lilia," he said, contemptuously. "that is her shawl. I saw her as I passed by the other morning: and that is Mr. Tracey walking with her." He paused a few moments, then added,—"You see what a very respectful distance is kept by that poor tool, Aylmer, and the animal, his companion."

Bernard followed the party with his eye, in a vexed silence.

"What a close conversation!" said Sholto: "they were so intent upon it, that they positively nearly walked into the pond! Well, what are we standing here for? *Presto! presto!* back, back! here, here! To walk with a man of Tracey's notorious infamy! to give him her arm!—look! I conceive," said the youth, conceitedly, "that any man has a lucky escape from her."

Bernard's eyes were still directed towards Lilia. He was influenced by Sholto; for generous and unsuspicious characters are too often governed by the more wary; but he perceived, plainly, the grave defects of a character thus immaturely mature, thus unhealthily ripened into knowledge, thus imbued with worldly distrust before the season of worldly wisdom had arrived: in any other case, had his own heart not known its weakness, he would have reproved Sholto. His mind, too, was soured by a deep-seated source of uneasinesss—an uncertainty which almost became anguish when he dwelt upon it, and which irritated a disposition naturally gay and confiding.

At last he moved down the hill.

"I shall not be long in this country," he said, in a melancholy tone; "and all that I could say now would have little influence."

"Are you not going to shoot any more?" asked Sholto.

"No; you can take the dogs with you. I was going to say, Sholto, that——don't let us talk of Miss Howard any more; it can do no good; and, whatever are her imprudences, I confess it gives me extreme pain," he added, in much emotion, "to hear her name thus freely impugned. We shall meet at dinner-time."

He walked rapidly on, and Sholto did not follow. He stood surprised, for a few moments, and then again looked after the walking party.

No one could ever make out, nor could he himself, from what originated his prejudice against Lilia. It seems idle to talk of an enmity without a source, and of spontaneous calumny; yet so it was in the mind of Sholto, and so it is in other minds.

Sholto, a little nettled by the implied rebuke from a brother whom he loved intensely, felt piqued to prove, though only to himself, the truth of his insinuations. He stretched himself up to his fullest height, to see the receding figures of Lilia and her party.

"There! they are positively almost a quarter of a mile in advance of the others! now turning into a bye-lane. How can the correct Miss Purdillion allow such things? and how will her remarks 'upon the sinfulness of man's nature' be multiplied!"

He smiled contemptuously and then pursued his way, calculating in his own mind, from what he had lately gleaned—for Sholto was not above the secrets of the backstairs—the probable amount of Mr. Tracey's debts. Bernard, meantime, went off as far from the direction in which Lilia was walking as he could. His thoughts were sad, and a bitter and wounded spirit was expressed in a countenance generally all benignant: for a nobler nature, a kinder heart, never existed than his, which was destined severely to suffer and to cause the sufferings of others.

But it happened, by some mysterious chance, which it would take too long to explain, were it worth explaining, that as he was crossing, in moody inattention, a corner of the common, on which was a green plot whitened by a flock of geese, he came full upon the party,—Tracey, with Lilia leaning on his arm, and Matthew, with Aylmer, following. Bernard's brow darkened as he passed them: he bowed, however, deferentially to Lilia, and coldly and haughtily to Tracey; and then, hurrying

on as if pursued by a wild beast, found himself in his own woods, and relaxed his speed.

"It is well—it is better," he said to himself, "that all should be confirmed. On Tracey's arm ! and this was the very being whom I almost worshipped for her modesty and innocence, and who, two months back——but that might be presumption. Poor Lilia ! I will never be the person to poison her mind against the object of her choice : may she not reform him ?"

As he walked on, the thought of her probable unhappiness when the veil should be drawn aside, the deep commiseration which he felt for any one whose hopes were centred in Tracey's character, and all the gentle recollections of a brief but pleasant acquaintance, softened Bernard towards Lilia. Like a young and ardent man, he did not, before he, even in thought, painted her destiny to himself, stop to inquire—Were the premisses true ? Was so trifling a circumstance as a country walk to be taken as evidence of a growing attachment ?

By a singular train of ideas, the past combined with the present, Bernard Elphinstone's thoughts then reverted to his own circumstances. He recalled the now dim images which hovered around the recollection of his youth ; his stately mother—her beautiful countenance, in its decline, often shaded by sorrow ; the harsher features of his father arose before him as, with downcast eyes, he trampled the crackling leaves under his feet. Then, by a strong effort, he sought to rekindle as it were the light of the past ; to review distinctly those days when, in mystery and disguised, his parents dwelt in a mean lodging at Paris, removing afterwards to the sombre precincts of St. Germain. He could distinctly remember hearing them called by a different name to that which he bore ; and he sickened at the thought. But then again uprose the figure of that parent whose death had been to him and to Sholto the signal of misfortune. In all her sorrow, yet never losing the dignity of her rank—in all her maternal kindness, and in her truth, Lady Janet stood before him. He was reassured ; the hidden secret which had so long burdened his heart pressed on it less. Would that he could, were it but for one moment, recall that being whose fond solicitude for him—for *him* peculiarly—and whose dying prayers that he might be righted, he remembered with a pang that, when they were expressed, his boyish mind had dwelt on them so little !

He was more cheerful, when Sholto returned to dinner, than his brother had known him to be for many days, and Sholto was secretly pleased to observe that he had recovered so well from the sight of Lilia hanging on Tracey's arm. Sarcastic and distrustful, Sholto was also both proud and ambitious.

His pride was founded upon the consciousness of high birth and of great expectations; his ambition was *once* removed; he idolised his brother, and looked to his forming a marriage far more likely to distinguish his family, and to embellish a pedigree with which Sholto had only become acquainted of late, which went back to the days of Malcolm Canmore.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DECEASE.

All this time, so short-sighted is human wisdom, Mrs. Howard and Miss Purdillion were congratulating themselves that Lilia was enjoying the delightful society, gilded by hopes of the future, of Mr. Matthew Purdillion.

"'Tis *so* kind!" observed Miss Purdillion, "so brotherly! so fatherly! I may call it, of Mr. Tracey to go with them. His superior rank, his superior age to my cousin Matthew's, and his far, far greater knowledge of society, give a sanction."

"Quite so," bowed Mrs. Howard. "His sentiments are very gentlemanlike."

"And then," interposed Miss Hartley, "Mr. Tracey's decided attentions elsewhere!"

"Ah, my dear friend! your partiality induces you to think well of your poor friend—but"—and Miss Purdillion cast up her eyes, "if I could tell how unprofitable I think myself!"

"The very last thing I should say of you, my dear Miss Purdillion!" cried Mrs. Howard.

"Ah! the best of us are but—as these rags!" exclaimed Miss Purdillion, holding up a specimen of that nature.

"Ah, indeed!" ejaculated Miss Hartley.

"And the world, it is as nothing to me! Mr. Tracey knows my sentiments well on that point."

"He will be Lord Ravenspur, will he not?" said Mrs. Howard, going on with her work.

"And who," cried Miss Hartley, who had penetrated into the heart of her friend, "could help forming a wish for his future happiness and welfare, that even an angel might approve of? And I am sure poor dear Mr. Thomas would, if he knew."

"Ah! my dear, dear Sarah! nothing but the hopes of extending my sphere of doing good would ever induce me to consent to such a thing. But, indeed," she added, with a saintly smile,

"why think of such a thing, before possibly poor Mr. Tracey has ever dreamed of it himself?"

But the other two ladies hastened to reprove her mistake, and to reassure her modesty. They were both certain that he meant something, and backed up their assertions by infallible signs. They accused her of having far too humble an opinion of herself—of a diffidence bordering on folly; "she would be mad not to see it," was Miss Hartley's strong expression; and then Mrs. Howard, as a married woman, had experiences on the subject. These were somewhat prolix, and lasted while she was hemming a frill; the "whipping" it alone dispelled the pleasing recollections of Mr. Howard's first sighs.

They were so absorbed in these speculations that even Mr. Rosam's appearance on the lawn seemed an interruption. He seldom, indeed, tried their patience in that way, for he did not look well by daylight, but always found his way home at the dinner-hour; for the man of genius had the practice peculiar to men of high inspiration, of not dressing till late in the day. What sublime reveries, as he went about in his dressing-gown and slippers, with his hands in his pockets, and neither shaven nor shorn, might possess him, it was not to be fathomed. His Muse was evidently a patroness of the unwashed; an enemy to the prejudice in favour of white linen; and a lady of extreme indulgence to the gentle excesses of smoking.

Mr. Rosam, therefore, passed off, and entering a backdoor was lost for some time, only to reappear in the very quintessence of full dress, perfumes, and diamond, or would-be diamond pins. Then reappeared the man of the world.

Scarcely had he closed his door, and began those mysteries which rendered him "the young poet," than there arrived, riding on a white horse, a pale gentleman, namely, the surgeon's assistant who had dispensed the last ether draught to the late Mr. Thomas Purdillion, for he was no more. A large letter, sealed with black, and professing to be written in all the distraction of grief by a distant cousin who had nursed Mr. Purdillion in his illness, imparted in a good round hand, and with a saintly composure of diction, that the event had taken place.

Immediately, before the unthinking world had time to intrude upon sorrow, was every shutter closed, and every blind drawn down. Three white handkerchiefs were taken out at once, and Miss Purdillion was given out as disconsolate for that day, with orders that the day after she was as well as could be expected. "For grief," she said, with an exaltation of sentiment which called forth the liveliest demonstrations of approval on the part of Mrs. Howard, "was not to be indulged,

however overpowering at the first." She then wrote to her dressmaker.

Scarcely was the process of seclusion completed, before there stood before the doors of that "house of sorrow," as Miss Hartley described it in various letters to various friends (a circular of poignant regrets), three persons very differently affected by the sight of a house closed up in broad daylight, telling the tale, always more or less appalling, that life's last scene had closed on one human sufferer. Lilia was the first, returning from the walk, to comprehend what had occurred; she hinted it to Mr. Tracey, and was struck by the workings of his countenance as he stopped short, and gazed upon the white window-shutters. Mr. Aylmer took but little interest in the event; but inquired, as Lilia said "I cannot ask you to come in—it is evident that Mr. Purdillion is dead."

"Shall you leave, then, and shall you return home?"

There was an anxiety in his manner that surprised Lilia. She had seldom much noticed Mr. Aylmer, except once or twice with astonishment, to find his eyes fixed on her. She returned, "Why do you ask? It is very likely we shall go to Hopewood—that is, I mean, to Mr. Hope's," she added colouring very deeply. She was obliged to go to the aid of poor Mr. Matthew Purdillion, who was leaning against a tree, his face covered with a large silk handkerchief.

"I hope," said Lilia, soothingly, "you will go in and see your friend Mr. Rosam; that will be a comfort, Mr. Matthew, will it not?"

"Oh, dear, porticularly so! Are you going in?" replied Matthew, behind the handkerchief.

"And who is Mr. Rosam?" asked Tracey.

"The young pawet!" said Matthew, still shrouded, and satisfying his conscience with that act of grief—"from 'Borth,' and a particular friend of mine. He'll be vawstly distressed; so will poor Morgaret."

"A young poet in the house!" whispered Tracey, *sotto voce*, to Aylmer. "At this time too! Unfortunate, is it not?"

"And he's such a very interesting young man, and so very pawetical even in his conversation, my cousin Morgaret thinks," added Matthew.

"Hem!—pray make my very, very kindest condolences to Miss Purdillion," said Tracey, with a manner full of the profoundest feelings. "The poet," he turned to Aylmer, "what's to be done? I shall call," he said aloud, "every day to inquire; and if you should hear any particulars, my dear young friend," he added, shaking Matthew's hand with a warmth that upset the young man's nerves, "of how your

poor cousin was, and felt, at the last, you will write to me. Good morning."

"He's a very fine gentleman, that," said Matthew to Lilia, as they turned to the house; "and particularly like—though you'll think it odd—my late fawther." As they spoke, they entered the little hall. All was dark, and treading softly, as if Grief were asleep and they feared to waken it, the two went up stairs.

Lilia found her step-mother, to her great satisfaction, packing up to depart. She was in the midst of muslins and calicoes, of lutestrings and tabinets.

"Yes, my dear, 'tis quite true, the uncertainty of life, you see—reach me that bandbox—we are here to-day and gone to-morrow—how worn-out this silk is!—such afflictions are good for us—I cannot think how ever Betty got up this apron so shamefully—it came like a shock upon me—I mean poor Mr. P's death—and what's the use," she added, stopping short in her operations, "of staying here, when we must, if we do, go into mourning out of compliment? I can't abide mourning, and I don't see why we should go to that expense."

Lilia cordially agreed with her.

"Then we'll leave to-morrow morning, and I will set you down at Hopewood, where, you say, you're invited. I don't mind about it in the least, but Miss Hope might have asked me, I think; but, of course, they are all anxiety to have me at home again. I never was a selfish person, and I so perpetually consider what others wish. My dear, you are never going to put your silk dresses into my box? They'll crowd it extremely!"

Lilia smilingly begged pardon, and owned she was thinking of something else. Too happy to go to Hopewood, to escape the choice society of the heiress of Biggleswade, she was going singing away, when a powerful 'hush!' from Mrs. Howard recalled her to propriety.

Miss Purdillion went through all the stages of affliction very successfully. As she bade her friends adieu, there was mingled, however, in conversation, some proofs of secret elation at the consciousness of her accession of fortune, which showed itself in a higher degree of sanctity and spiritual pride than ever. Lilia was relieved when, at length, the carriage drove away, and she found herself on the road to Hopewood.

How refreshing was the moral atmosphere of that place, after the cramped air of the circle which she had left! How doubly valuable did refinement and intellect appear! how beautiful was the sincerity of her friends! how unobstrusive,

yet how felt, their religious tone of mind! Nevertheless, the place had its dangers. Wherever Lilia turned, wherever she went, Hopewood stood before her. Her chamber-window overlooked its park; above yonder trees arose its ancient gables; below, on the river, was moored the boat belonging to the house. Nor was her yielding heart exempt from even greater perils, for the habits of intimacy between Mr. Hope and his tenants were of the closest kind.

One evening, the first that Lilia spent with her friends, Bernard came in unexpectedly with Sholto. He started when he saw her; and Lilia *felt* that had he, perhaps, known of her being there, he would not have come: yet he stayed, and his spirits seemed less depressed that when they had last met, and Lilia roused herself to aid the general enjoyment. One of those evenings, such as in after life one remembers with fond and pleasurable regret, ensued. There was no effort, no display, no loud merriment, no forced sentiment; the unbending of cultured minds, the natural expressions of good and refined feelings, constituted its delight—one of those which wealth cannot purchase.

The moonbeams slept upon the park when, at an hour late for the parsonage, Bernard and his brother crossed down a little path, and, opening a wicket gate, walked homewards. The exhilaration of an evening so congenial to his tastes gave a fine expression to the countenance of Bernard as it was upraised, contemplating the masses of shadows, the illumined points and breaks, the dark recesses of Hopewood House. Sholto, shorter as he was, more limited though more keen in capacity, and intensely proud of his brother, could not forbear looking upon his noble features and fine powerful form with admiration. A bitter vexation had possessed him when he observed, what was so ill-disguised, that Bernard hung on every word of Lilia's; that he watched, yet seemed not to watch, every movement of hers; that, at the sound of her voice, whatever was the theme on which he was conversing with others, his thoughts were hers. To others he might seem to pay her no other attention than such as politeness enforced, but Sholto understood him better.

"Do you know," he said, as they walked along, "I have one prediction to make, that Mr. Hope will marry Miss Lilia Howard. I am certain that he admires her."

Bernard made no reply, but went on thoughtfully.

"It would, certainly, be a good thing to take her out of the power of Tracey," resumed Sholto.

"How do you know," exclaimed Bernard, quickly, "that she is in his power, or likely to be? On the contrary, she

spoke of him to-night without embarrassment, and, as it appeared to me, with great justice and good sense."

"Well, then, I think she will marry Hope," persisted Sholto.

"I am sure she will not, Sholto; and beware how you couple Mr. Hope's name with that of a lady to whom it might be unpleasant," continued Bernard, with some emotion, "that you should do so. Besides, there are reasons why Mr. Hope will never marry."

"You pity him?" asked Sholto, in a sarcastic tone, "from the way in which you speak."

"Under every circumstance he is a person to be envied," replied Bernard, after a moment's hesitation.

They now stood before the hall door; it was opened, and Sholto, taking up a candle, bade his brother good night. He ran up stairs, but returned again in a moment to remind his brother of a fishing-party which had been arranged, comprising the two ladies from Hopewood, on the following day,—"In case you should happen to forget it," he added, with a sarcastic smile.

Bernard was standing, appearing to have no thought of retiring to rest, opposite to a large bay-window, furnished with strong iron stanchions, and therefore without shutters. It looked upon the terrace; whilst beyond, at some distance, rose the ancient detached gateway, standing isolated and useless, for it no longer served as an entrance, the road having been taken round another way. He scarcely turned to answer Sholto, whose littlenesses had vexed that night a heart full of kindness: for Bernard read his feelings, and saw, with a mingled sorrow and displeasure, the pride and burning ambition which were there: the deepest pity, at certain moments, accompanied those feelings. Was it these which occupied him as he stood, while all around him was in the deepest silence, one candle alone burning on the hall-table; or was it the gloom which always possessed him, when alone in that high vaulted chamber, and closed in, as it were, at night with the associations of the departed?

These Bernard had of late, in the variableness of spirit, retraced. That house, he well knew, with its park and dependencies, were only held in trust by Mr. Hope for a brother, a young man of great promise, who, just on coming of age, had been attacked by insanity. For a time he had been suffered, attended only by his brother, to wander about his own fine property, as he was quiet. Then he grew worse; then he was confined to his house, with suitable attendants: in that very hall he had been, as it were, a beloved and unhappy prisoner,

until, in an unguarded moment, an attempt upon his own life had rendered another plan, another mode of durance and of preservation, imperatively necessary. He had now become hopelessly insane, and his brother had the charge of all his worldly affairs.

This deep affliction, Bernard well knew, had fallen upon the brother and sister just as they entered upon society, with every advantage of fortune, of person, and of character. It was, of course, felt acutely, and by Mr. Hope so long, that his health became impaired. His sister had, seemingly, borne it better; but both had made one resolution—never to marry. She had been on the point of forming an excellent connection: she broke it off decisively. Whether it be in the scheme of Providence that beings so endowed with every capability of enjoyment in domestic life, with every susceptibility that could be wounded, with warm, unemployed affections, should thus be doomed to the desolation of enforced celibacy, it is, indeed difficult to determine. God, who dealt the blow, will appreciate the sacrifice to principle. No self-deception frustrated its fullest completion; and, doubtless, many gnawing anxieties, much self-reproach, were avoided by that act of duty and self-denial.

Bernard recurred to this little narrative that night. The high notions of honour, which he carried almost to a fault, made him severely condemn himself for even a transient forgetfulness of his present circumstances. If others had, as in Miss Hope's case, surmounted an attachment which became wrong when it might involve the happiness of others, why could not he do the same? His reflections were unexpectedly broken in upon by a servant, who hastened in to tell him that a gentleman had been waiting for him in the library for some hours—so long, that he had himself forgotten he was there.

"'Tis the same gentleman," he added, "that was here a month ago."

Bernard started from his soliloquy; he hastened to the library, and that night was passed in a conversation so earnest, that it was not broken off until daylight.

The gentleman was a well-known and frequent visitant—one of that class whose very countenances produce a sinking of the heart—a lawyer. Mildly, however, had fate dealt with those victims who had Mr. Short, or Short & Son (for both were excellent; the father was but the son in a more mature stage) for their attorneys. A small, though somewhat sturdy figure; a brow wrinkled by business; a calm, definite mode of expression, and a pair of spectacles, were the characteristic attributes of the Mr. Short.

Yet, in spite of Mr. Short's known capacity, in spite of his

often-felt kindness of heart, Bernard turned pale as he saw him, and bade him—there was relief in the prefatory action—to sit down.

"You are very good. I have been here some time," said Mr. Short, "but could not go to bed till I had seen you. I must leave to-morrow at eight."

"Some wine?" inquired Bernard, ringing the bell.

"No, I thank you—no, thank you: if *you* do not require it, I do not."

Mr. Short little thought how much those words might imply.

"Well, sir (those two words, even from a lawyer, make one shiver), we have come to something more definitive than what I told you last time. We have been enabled, through a by-way, to come at the meaning of our opponents. You remember," he resumed, settling his spectacles, "that I was only enabled to apprise you generally of their plan, which was, and which is to deny—you'll excuse me—the real parentage itself of yourself and brother. You have informed him, I dare say, of the threats of the opposite parties; we must have him along with us, of course."

"No; I have not yet informed Sholto," said Bernard, in a faltering voice. "I waited until I saw you again."

"Very well; quite time enough. I hinted on the 25th of August, when I had the honour of waiting on you, Mr. Elphinstone, of their general designs. We must now come to particulars. "We will go over, if you please," continued Mr. Short, "the whole of the affair; and of their statements, we will rehearse them from the *beginning*." He wiped his spectacles, and then, fetching from an adjoining room one of those deep, dark, iniquitous-looking green bags, which seem to be charged with evils for mankind, he dealt out to the unfortunate Bernard Elphinstone some of those miseries which cost so much, not only of actual suffering, but prove also such a very expensive kind of grief to the afflicted. "Your mother—her ladyship," Mr. Short began—but, on second thoughts, I will submit what the good gentleman said in a narrative of my own. Conceive, therefore, a green bag and a black coat, brown with the dust of Gray's Inn; interpose, at intervals, the wiping of a large pair of spectacles, and read my tale quite through.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXPLANATION.

THE Lady Janet Elphinstone, the mother of Bernard and of Sholto, was the sister of a Scottish nobleman of exalted rank, but of a character very different from her own; for cursed, not with a violent, suspicious temper, but with a tendency to low pleasures and a love of low society, Lord Elphinstone had retained one gentle affection only—this was his love for his sister. Accordingly, to the exclusion of a half-brother, whom I shall here call Lord Sinclair, and, failing his own issue, he executed a deed, with a privity of certain noblemen, "constituting the Lady Janet his heir-female, and providing that her children should bear the name and arms of Elphinstone."

Lady Janet, for whose benefit this disposition was made, was at that time unmarried. Beautiful, irreproachable, accomplished, and gentle, and her brother's heir, her hand might well be deemed a proper match for that of any Scottish nobleman; and it was natural that her brother should regard her with pride, and expect her to form such an alliance as would, in the proudest country of Europe, enhance his name. Imbued with these sentiments, he offered his sister a settlement of six hundred a-year—then esteemed a large provision—and an estate, and allowing her the free choice of any nobleman or gentleman of high condition. But Lady Janet, whose affection for her brother was disinterested, urged him, on his part, to a second marriage, he being then a widower; but without success. Neither did Lady Janet, at that time, think of marriage; whether from a secret attachment, or from a dislike to that condition, is not known. Unhappy was it that, in this respect, she then did not comply with the wishes of her brother.

Lord Elphinstone afterwards fell into difficulties; and, like many persons in that condition, he ran into society beneath him, and sank under their baneful influence. Three persons mainly governed this ill-starred nobleman; these were, his factor (a man named Campbell), a former guardian of his (named Macdonald), and a Major Kerr, a man of high connections and of dissolute life, who was rather the tool of the other two persons than a prime mover in their affairs. It was

the aim of these men to warp, for their own venal purposes, the mind of Lord Elphinstone against his sister, to fill it with suspicions that she wanted to get his estates sequestrated, that she might herself be placed at the head of them; that she caused his friends and acquaintances to put affronts on him, and jealousies and enmities were infused, which, unfortunately, were never dispelled until the grave had closed over Lady Janet, and her character had appeared in its new and beautiful light. When Lord Elphinstone, whose profligacy was detected in Edinburgh, was insulted in his house there by the mob upon some public occasion, he was led to believe that Lady Janet was the contriver of this outrage, whilst her accomplice was declared to be a gentleman of family but of little fortune, to whom Lady Jane had latterly become attached; this was a Colonel Moncrieff, whom Lord Elphinstone was taught to brand by the opprobrious names of Jacobite and Papist.

Such were the arts used to separate, for ever, the brother and sister. They were successful. Lady Janet, driven to despair, married Moncrieff and went abroad; and, as far as their mutual affection was concerned, the marriage was happy. The colonel was handsome, and of acknowledged honour; but he was thoughtless and profuse. Their marriage was blessed by two sons, both of them born in France

"To one of whom they gave the name," said Mr. Short, looking up from his papers, "of Bernard, and to the other of Sholto. Now," added the lawyer, "you know where we are. I need hardly rehearse to you, that to avoid the plots of her enemies, whose object was to gain from Lord Elphinstone a deed of revocation, so as to take away from her the inheritance he had assigned, she travelled from place to place under a false name. The privations of your childhood, and her ladyship's distresses, are they fixed in your memory, as you have affirmed *here?*" He laid his hand on some papers as he spoke. "Do you recall any incident which occurred on your mother's return to Scotland?"

"I can remember," said Bernard, "when my mother, who was, as we have since been informed, reduced to the greatest extremities by my uncle's withdrawal of her allowance, resolved, as her last effort, to throw herself at his feet, that we accompanied her, and she was refused. We stood for a long time at the gate of a castle, which I have since learned for a certainty was Castle Elphinstone."

"That recollection," replied Mr. Short, "is of great, very great importance to our case. Your father, Mr. Elphinstone, was then in prison for debt; but I have the statement here,

in your case. 'Pinched for the want of necessaries, her husband in prison for debt, her child looking up to her for support——' But I distress you, sir?"

"It is no matter. I wish, however, to know on what fresh information, what new evidence, I am to submit to the aspersions upon my mother, and to my own utter ruin?"

"Your mother's enemies were soon busily at work; and, after her death, they succeeded in their schemes, and Lord Elphinstone executed another deed, debarring and excluding the lawful issue of his sister, Lady Janet, from succeeding to his estates, and substituting a fresh line: a disgrace, indeed, to his ancient house, introducing a fresh name in the succession. It therefore became indifferent to your interests—you will pardon me, sir—whether you were the lawful son of Lady Janet, or brought out of a foundling-hospital at Paris, as has been stated; or——but this is nothing to the purpose. It happened, however, that your uncle, Lord Elphinstone, married—married, too, a lady of honour, a relation, too, of his own. She made it her business to inquire into all the reasons of her brother's procedure, and the result was, her determination in your favour. It was, as you will observe, no interest of hers to engraft upon the house of Elphinstone an impostor."

"No," answered Bernard, in a low and melancholy tone. Do not speak quite so loud; it is just possible that my brother, where he sleeps, may hear our voices."

"But, and if you were the real son of Lady Janet, Lady Elphinstone had, as you will observe, every inducement to a generous mind, for the honour of the family, to provide, that its nearest relation should not be cast off; she made it, therefore, her business to clear up every fact relative to Lady Janet, and succeeded so well, that Lord Elphinstone was fully satisfied that aspersions had been cast upon his sister calumniously. When he heard that she had died in want of the common necessaries of life, he shed tears. You were not, sir, as I perceive by your agitation, previously aware of these facts?"

"No, sir," replied Bernard; "not fully. I remember, indeed, my mother's privations distinctly—her patience under them." He paused, then added, "Pray go on, sir."

Mr. Short then resumed his narrative, which he extended to a considerable length; but the substance of which shall here be briefly given.

"Upon Lady Janet's death, her boys were left helpless, almost dependent on charity; for Mrs. Helen Hewit, in whose care they remained, had not the means of supporting them. An aged lady, who had known their mother in her youth,

took them to her home, and there they awaited the interposition which she undertook in their favour with Lord Elphinstone.

"That nobleman, stung by reproach, resolved to do them justice. He lamented that his sister had not only been neglected before her death, but afterwards; and his lordship eventually revoked the settlement in favour of the family of Moncrieff, and executed an entail of his estates in favour of his nephew."

"It is now attempted, after two years' possession of those estates," said Mr. Short, after rehearsing these facts, "to bring forward proofs that your mother was capable of a gross imposture, and that persons of the meanest birth were your parents. This imputation is not a recent one—it was even cast upon his father before him. The guardians, or, as they call them in Scotland, the tutors of the young Lord Moncrieff, are the pursuers; let us bring his good courage to the combat."

"Yes; but is it necessary to tell my brother?" answered Elphinstone quickly.

"In that you will do as you think fit. Our adversaries are preparing their troops; but, if you have any particular inducement to wait for a time, let it be so. And now, sir, I have a vast mass of documentary evidence to go through with you on my return here, which must be in a few days. You are aware, that acting, as I have the honour of doing, as your professional adviser in England, I bring matters thus before you; but it will be tried before the Court of Session in Scotland."

Bernard made no reply, but passed his hand before his brow, as if his head was throbbing with pain and confusion. The good man bustled out of the room, and the young man was left to his own reflections. These, whatever their general character, whether of hope or of fear, of anger or of sorrow, kept him long pacing to and fro in that lonely chamber, after the man of law had sunk into his well-earned repose.

CHAPTER X.

THE SEPARATION.

The fishing-party next day regretted, some aloud, others secretly, the absence of Bernard; but just as they had given

up all hopes of seeing him, he appeared winding slowly up the side of the stream. He had to pass Lilia, who was sitting at some distance from the rest. When he came near to her he stopped short, for he felt an almost insurmountable desire to explain to her the variableness of his conduct, to hint at his real feelings, to interest her in his behalf. He abstained, nevertheless; but Lilia, struck by the deep melancholy of his countenance, looked earnestly and almost tenderly at him as he stood, his eyes fixed upon her fishing-rod. He read her thoughts; but an expression of pain succeeded the mournfulness which had before prevailed. He drew his hand across his eyes; then Lilia spoke.

"I am sure, Mr. Elphinstone," she said, in a kind, low voice, "you are very unhappy. Do speak to Mr. Hope; do confide in him." She stopped, blushing at her earnestness. "I ought to apologise, though, for this intrusion upon your distress, whatever it may be."

"Apologise! oh, no! Indeed, you are right," replied Bernard. "I do want some friend at this moment, and yet no one can assist me—nor indeed console me," he added, with great agitation: and, turning away, he walked on rapidly, but before he encountered the second party he was calm.

Lilia did not dare even to look after him; but her eyes were moistened with tears, as she gazed upon the rippling stream, with a strange feeling of envy of the happiness of those little birds who sportively touched in their flight the surface of the water, and then returned to their homes again.

She arose (for her fishing-rod became a burden to her, and she longed to throw it all into the water), and joined the party. She found Mr. Hope pressing Bernard earnestly to return to dinner. His resolution was wavering, and, perhaps, from the dread of encountering alone that silent hall and his own thoughts he yielded, yet not without a pang of self-reproach. "A very, very short time," he reflected, "must disclose all. What will Mr. Hope say? What will Miss Hope think if the allegation against my birth should be established—and God knows I have no proof to rebut them,—that I am not what I pretend; that they have cherished the acquaintance of a low-born foundling—the child of shame and obscurity?" He walked, his eyes bent on the ground, as he thus ruminated.

But he was among the *kind*. He felt, though he did not define it to himself, that soothing effect which springs from that conviction, and which heals the festering wounds inflicted by circumstances. He saw and read the gentle, untold sympathy of all around him—the unobtrusive effort to cheer;—

and gradually his spirits yielded to the benignant exertions of that social charity which so far exceeds great displays of generosity in its effect on the happiness of mankind.

Another evening of bliss to all, of danger to some, passed fleetingly away. Of this, a portion was spent in looking over some old prints of celebrated houses, in a county history which lay upon the table. Stiff old seats, with their maze and their skittle-ground, their yew-trees "shot up into porcupines," their terraces and fountains were thus brought under review.

Sholto was greatly interested in these. "That castle," he said, "has a donjon just where it ought to have, and where it is in Elphinstone Castle, my brother's place, I believe. *You* remember it, Bernard? Is not it like Elphinstone?" Sholto, looking up in his brother's face, read a strange expression there; yet he went on. "Our family, Miss Hope, is connected with that of the Stuarts, Earls of Angus, who, in the thirteenth century——" He was interrupted by Bernard's hurriedly turning the leaf over.

Lilia saw this little action, and afterwards remembered what irritation there was for an instant on a face beaming, usually, with happiness. Her heart, deeply touched by evident suffering, was now almost gone—given away, and given for ever. All prudent persons will condemn her; and she suffered for the error:—for the present, however, coupled with a tender solicitude, was the exquisite enjoyment of loving truly and disinterestedly.

She suffered, though as the evening drew to a close, for that night was her last at Hopewood; on the following day she was to dine at Haskreton Hall with Mr. and Miss Hope, and there to remain a few days; and she had seen for the last time, perhaps for weeks, that face which to her was dearer in its abstraction than in its radiance of health and happiness.

When the brothers departed, Lilia withdrew to her room, and gazing after them bade, as it were, an adieu that her lips had not uttered; and proffered a fervent hope that the cares, whatever they might be, which weighed down the spirits of Bernard might pass away.

In the morning, however, after breakfast, she again heard his voice; he was asking for Mr. Hope, who was alone in his library, and thither Bernard found him. A long and agitating interview ensued.

Mr. Hope was reading when Bernard entered, and, as he looked at him, he envied the scholastic leisure, the settled, though somewhat melancholy repose of Mr. Hope's air and manner. The pale brow and thoughtful eyes of the clergyman

were indeed strongly contrasted with the flushed cheek and strong emotions of the young man.

"If you are not occupied, I wish much to have some conversation with you," were his words, uttered with an air of resolution; yet as he spoke, his lip quivered.

"No," said Mr. Hope, closing the volume before him, "I am not busy," and extending his hand; "your hand is burning—you are ill? I must get Alice to prescribe for you."

"It is an illness," replied Bernard, endeavouring to smile, "that admits not even of your kind sister's remedies; to your advice, to your experience, to your kindness of heart, I look—" his voice faltered as he uttered the last words, "for instruction as well as solace."

"In what?" inquired Mr. Hope, with much solicitude. He paused for a few moments, and then added, with his usual delicacy and feeling, to prevent the necessity of a painful explanation,—"it is probably in reference to some trouble regarding your estates? I understand, indeed, from a friend who has written to me several times on the subject, that the guardians of the infant Lord Moncrieff have asserted claims to it. Well, you must face the foe."

"That, with the ablest assistance," replied Bernard, "I am prepared to do. All that law, all that ingenuity can do," he added, with a deep-drawn sigh, "will be done; but,——"

"But what?" interposed Mr. Hope.

"Counsel me," said Bernard, eagerly. "Make this cause your own. I was a child of eleven years old when the great misfortune of my life—the death of my mother, Lady Janet Elphinstone, occurred. You may yourself judge how little a boy of that age thinks of the future, how little he observes, how defective he is in judgment, how devoid of fear. My mother's fondness for us both was such, and our love for her so great, that there could not exist in any one who knew us a doubt of our relationship; and I own to you, that if I encountered the man who should dare to cast upon her purity and truth a slight, I could not help inflicting on him some personal injury; yet"—he stopped to check the burst of passion which followed these words—"yet, with all her love for us, she left no proof of our birth."

"Are you sure of that circumstance?" asked Mr. Hope, anxiously.

"Yes, no inquiry, no offered rewards, can discover such proofs—neither the certificates of baptism nor the date of our birth. She often told me, indeed, with tears, that she *had* done so; and that no bribery, no threats, nor promise of aid to us, should wrest them from her. After her death, they

were sought for in vain. My father died first, but we were acknowledged by the late Lord Elphinstone as his heirs, and placed under the guardianship of Lord Sinclair."

"And has his lordship no proofs ?"

"None but the dying assurance of my mother." He hesitated for a time, and then said, with firmness, and his figure assumed additional nobleness as he spoke, "That we *are* the sons of Lady Janet and of Colonel Moncrieff, born without reproach, and the first heirs to the estates of Elphinstone, I have never for an instant doubted ; but of the force of *proof* I despair. Under these circumstances, Mr. Hope, I have come to one decision,—I may be, before this year closes, a beggar in the eyes of society—an impostor. I have, therefore, formed the resolution of leaving Hopewood, of discharging all my just debts there, and of resigning the estate into your hands. I was promised a commission in His Majesty's service ; I have of late solicited it, and it has been given. I can no longer spend what is not my own. I shall join my regiment ; and if my cause here should prosper, I will return when all is settled ; if not,—will you tell my brother this ?"

"I will do whatever you wish," replied Mr. Hope. "Is he, then, unprepared ?"

"Entirely. Be gentle with him," added Bernard, his whole frame trembling ; "be merciful to his youth, the pride in which we have been reared, to his disappointed hopes : he is yet but a boy."

"I will treat him as *you* would. What are your plans ?"

Bernard started from a transient reverie as the question was uttered.

"I go to Scotland to-day, to make every effort, and to see there the friends of my family. I *cannot* see my brother at present : *you* will see him ?"

"I will, indeed ; but why should you leave us ! " urged Mr. Hope.

"I could not stay to be an object of suspicion and of distrust, at all events, where I have lived in honour. Besides, I have, for the present, but a soldier's means. I must not involve others in my certain ruin—certain, for you must be aware that in these cases all arrears are claimed. Do not omit to see Sholto to-day," he resumed. "I left him without saying farewell ; tell him—what I hope you may say—that I am enabled to bear this threatened danger and disgrace ; tell him that I concealed it from him only from affection. Teach him, my dear friend, to value birth, fortune, less ; yet bear with his follies—the follies of a boy."

He grasped Mr. Hope's hand as he spoke, then turned away,

and with a choking sensation, and almost gasping for air, he found himself in the garden.

A glow of sunshine lighted up the bright autumnal flowers. There were bee-hives, too, in that rectory-garden, and their burring aided the general effect of happiness. Below the bank, the pure river ran glittering in its course, spangled by the water-lily. In the distance, Hopewood's gables and portals appeared. Such was the scene on which the young man, now preparing to leave for a remote station in Ireland, gazed.

Lilia was in the garden, cutting off the dead flowers from the borders. Her cheek mantled with a deep blush as he approached her, and stood, in apparent abstraction, near her. Bernard did not attempt to speak. She remembered afterwards the fixed and mournful expression of his eyes as they met hers; but almost instantly he extended his hand, pressed hers hastily, and passed rapidly onwards.

Mr. Hope came out a few moments afterwards; his voice trembled as he asked, "Did you see Mr. Elphinstone?"

"Yes," replied Lilia, looking at him, alarmed; "but did he not take the road to Hopewood?"

"No," answered Mr. Hope; "I dare say he did not take that road."

"Mr. Hope," cried Lilia, transported beyond her stock of prudence, "what is the matter?"

She turned her face towards him as she spoke. A grave, almost reproving look met hers; her question was not answered, and she dared not repeat it. She bent her head down upon the flowers, and wished that she had not asked it, and betrayed feelings which she was certain that Mr. Hope had detected.

CHAPTER XI.

A DINNER PARTY IN THE LAST CENTURY.

At four, the carriage was brought round; for five o'clock was then the fashionable dinner-hour; Mr. and Miss Hope, and Lilia, set off for Haskreton.

Lord Ravenspur was sitting in the drawing-room when they entered;—for his son, and the company staying in the house had been on an excursion, and were not then dressed for dinner. He was a gentleman, even then deemed of the old school, with the remains of a handsome person, with a delicately fair

complexion, already deeply touched by care, for the follies and vices of his son had saddened a heart too much given up to the world, yet naturally kind. He was infirm, too, and, as he attempted to rise, looked round for some one to assist him.

A gentleman near him came forward; whilst, on the other hand, Isabel Tracey hurried to give him her slender arm in aid. Both were zealous in their attentions, but it were easy to perceive that the one was the aid of paid services, the other the ready attention of affection. Mr. Pratt, for so Lord Ravenspur called him, was a fat, round, smooth-looking man, whose light eyes were scarcely ever raised from the floor, and whose treble voice was never heard above a dulcet pitch; he was Lord Ravenspur's secretary, and a clergyman; for the rest, let him speak for himself. He gave a broad arm to the support of the viscount, and said, in his usually harmonious strains, as if he were addressing a young lamb, "There, my Lord, you will do well to sit down again; the erect position," he added, in seraphic tones, "is deleterious."

But Isabel gave her slight support to her relation's aid without speaking; she looked up affectionately at him, and her expression of melancholy was changed, for an instant, into one of pleasure.

There was a strange mixture of the intellectually great and the hereditarily great at Lord Ravenspur's table. Here stood, in his powdered wig and diamond buckles—somewhat like Doodle or Noodle, one's child-day favourites, a nobleman; a poet *protégé* of Lord Ravenspur's was shivering, not being yet warmed through after weeks of starving in Grub-street, in a dingy suit, with a faded embroidered waistcoat, by his side. On him, Mr. Frederick Rosam, who entered with his dear friend, Mr. Matthew Purdillion, looked contumeliously; for no contempt is like that felt by a fortunate writer, who aims at combining the gentleman with the poet, for the mere hack. It is venomous: and as malice, according to a grave writer, "makes fiends of us," so Mr. Rosam stood aloof, his hair, as usual, redundant, and his ruffles most delicate; whilst, already, the man of sarcasm was perceptible in his looks.

There was planted a veteran general, covered with orders gained under Marlborough; near him, a group of pamphleteers, who went in couples; Mr. Blaze, a sanguine-looking, happy, fat man, attached to the ministers; whilst Mr. Frigid, a creature with mulatto features, done in white—white hair, white eyebrows, white complexion—answered him. They knew each other's cue perfectly, and sometimes changed sides for a little relief, and for fear they should get into an awkward habit of sincerity.

In contrast to these, stood the sturdy, dusty, heavy-browed compiler—one of Lord Ravenspur's *corps de reserve*—to whom he owed much, it was said, of his own reputation. In short, here was the whole manufactory of letters—the patronising and the patronised; the poet who fed with dedications, and was fed in return; the pamphleteer, who kept political enemies at bay; the pioneer, who prepared the way, and cleared it for the lordling from literary difficulties: to sum up the whole, the great patron himself, to whom it was no small expense to be be-rhymed and celebrated in those days. The rich and great have it all their own way now; they have only to read and to praise, and to send a polite letter, which, sealed with a blazing coronet, is autographed, or thrown with careless care on a drawing-room table. If they invite the man of letters to a crowd, to partake of a little swimming ice and cold tea, he is much honoured: but, in former days, they had to pay down hard cash for the compliments proffered to them.

Amidst this assembly, Mr. Tracey and Mr. Aylmer at last entered. They were both exquisitely dressed, and moved into the circle with that easy grace which had long been Mr. Rosam's despair. But, then, what advantages they had in those days! what becoming full-dressed coats! what lovely stockings! what shoes, blazing with diamonds! what ruffles! and what divine waistcoats!

"People call the half-hour before dinner one of misery," said Tracey to Miss Hope; "for my part, I think it the best part of a feast. The amusement of seeing people come in, the delight of making out who they are, the confidence of some, the unfeigned distress of others"——he stopped short, as if suddenly recollecting something, then said, hastily, "I think I have not presented my cousin to you: Isabel—Miss Hope."

The person whom he addressed formed, at that moment, a strong contrast to the animated groups around her. Like the death's head, with a wreath of roses, described in the "Epicurean," she seemed placed there as a memento of sorrow, and an emblem of our mortal state. The fixed attitude and look of thoughtful dejection that she ever wore, were abandoned, for a moment, as she raised her eyes and met those of Tracey. A flush passed over her pale cheek, and she came irresolutely forward; but, after a timid return to the courtesies paid her, shrank back again into her retreat, almost behind Lord Ravenspur's chair.

"Your cousin?" said Miss Hope; "has she been long resident in your family?"

"Some years. She is the daughter of an unfortunate rela-

tion of my father's, and has been chiefly in London; and that is, perhaps, the reason you have never seen her. Have you been riding much lately?"

"Not much: but I heard," resumed Miss Hope, "that you *had* a cousin staying here. How is it that you never brought her to Mr. Hopewood?"

"She is immoveable. Besides," replied Tracey, carelessly, "she is so very useful to my father."

At this moment, some ladies of high rank, for whom dinner had been waiting, entered, and a procession was soon seen marching to the dining-room, consisting of Lord Ravenspur, and one of these his titled guests. He was leaning on the arm of Mr. Pratt, who moved almost stealthily, as it were, by his lordship's side. After passing through a suite of noble rooms, the party, peers, poets, pamphleteers, and ladies entered a dining-room, in which a banquet, rather than a dinner, awaited them.

Mr. Tracey led out Miss Hope: between them a gay warfare of raillery was carried on; and the uninitiated might regard it as symtomatic; but each of the parties understood the other; and such feelings as Mr. Tracey could boast were, at that instant, peculiarly engaged in another quarter. After some disorder, and not without a strict regard to the distinctions of rank, the party were arranged; the rules of etiquette being more fiercely observed, as Tracey remarked, at the lower end of the table.

It was the destiny of Lilia to sit next to Mr. Matthew Purdillion—that it would be so, she felt certain, from the moment after his first greeting—when, after observing "that the party was large," he took his stand near her, and intimated, by repeatedly holding out his arm whenever he fancied that dinner was about to be announced, his intention of never quitting her, if possible. Lilia perceived that she must make the best of circumstances, so she tried to enter into conversation. She inquired after Miss Purdillion, whose very existence she had almost forgotten in her dreams of happiness during the last few days.

"Indifferent, I thank you. She is remorkably resigned—quite morvellous how well she bears our late bereavement." He looked down upon a new suit of black as he spoke. "I assure you I was vostly unwilling to come here to-day, as being indecorous, and except to pay my respects to my Lord Ravenspur."

"Oh," said Lilia, with some impatience, "it was quite natural you should like to come."

"I am glad you think so—quite natural! So it is!" as if a

new idea struck him. "You have heard how particularly handsome the old gentleman behaved to me?"

"No, indeed, I did not. Had we not better walk a little more quickly? they are sitting down to dinner."

In the arrangements, Lilia was placed not very far from Mr. Tracey, near enough to perceive that, whilst he reciprocated from the bottom of the table his noble father's hospitality at the top, his soul was not absorbed in doing what were then the noisy honours of the feast. She began, with a sort of apprehension, to feel that she was the object of his devoted, though silent gallantry. She felt a relief, almost, in the safe attentions of Mr. Matthew. Why Mr. Aylmer, who sat opposite should regard her with such fixed and, frequently, grave looks she could not understand.

The conversation and deportment of the guests were exactly what might be expected. There was much state and much polite ignorance among the powdered peers, above whom Lord Ravenspur shone like a beacon on a dark night. There was as much exclusiveness among the high-born ladies as there would be in the present day in any mixed company. There was an effort to shine, in Blaze—a meteor-like impetuosity of discourse. There was a system of doubt of all that was said, a sifting of evidence, as it were, in Frigid. The man of ponderous knowledge, once or twice, contradicted them all round; then, finding but little attention to what he said, went on eating his dinner, laying down his knife and fork once or twice to look up with wonderment at their loose statements. The poor poet from Grub-street seemed much abashed at all the magnificence, and ate sparingly, and with a timidity, as if he were afraid of being frightened, and thanked the servants very humbly when they brought him any thing; and said, "Very good," to all the witticisms which Mr. Rosam uttered. For Mr. Rosam, the poor broken-spirited man of real genius felt, was a much greater man than himself; in which opinion Mr. Rosam most cordially agreed with him.

These formed a sort of class of themselves; then came several country parsons, who were listening in slow admiration to Mr. Pratt. He was laying down aphorisms, old as the hills, from Rochefoucault, talking of Dr. Johnson, and quoting Lord Chesterfield, and rehearsing in a delicate voice, and with celestial good nature, stale stories about them—the first reminiscences of school-boys just out of their teens.

There was an easy little group, who all knew each other. Miss Hope, gay and decisive, a *little* more animated when she talked to Tracey than to anybody else—he looking so ineffably different to all the other gentlemen, and she, armed with

well-bred ease, that most valuable possession of polished life.

"Your brother is grave to-day," said Tracey to her, directing her attention to Mr. Hope, who sat near to the top of the table ; "is he ill ?"

"No," said Alice, and her countenance instantly changed ; "he has had, I suspect, some trouble about Hopewood to-day."

Lilia, though trying to listen to a narrative of Mr. Matthew's getting wet, when a boy, fishing, "and his dear mother's great awnxiety," caught that well known sound : she coloured and listened. Her countenance was not unobserved by Tracey.

"What !" said Tracey, in a tone intended to be heard, "has he, at last, found out that the pretentions of that gentleman——" (He stopped short.) "But I must not offend Miss Hope."

"You may distress, but you will not convince me," she replied. "But I think the subject had better be reserved for another opportunity."

"The thing," rejoined Tracey, "is public ; there is no mystery about it ; it is well known that Mr. Elphinstone will be very little troubled with the care of his estates" (he glanced at Lilia as he spoke) ; "the matter is to be brought before the Court of Session, in Scotland, some time this winter, indeed, soon."

His words had reached his destined object. She hung her head, and the colour left her cheek, and henceforth all of that gorgeous dinner passed before her eyes unseen. It was, indeed, a relief when the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, and she found herself able to speak to Miss Hope.

"Oh, do come with me!" she said, in a tone of distress. "Is it, can it be true, that Mr. Elphinstone is likely to lose his estates ? Is it true, dear Miss Hope, that there is any reflection upon his honour ?"

Miss Hope looked at her, surprised. "You really tremble so, Lilia," she whispered, drawing her into the inclosure of a deep window, "that I should say you were in love with Mr. Elphinstone, but that I too well know your good sense." She paused for a moment, and, looking sternly at the drooping girl, added :—"I trust that nothing so unwise has ever entered your head. At all events, he is gone, and will, probably, return to Hopewood no more."

Lilia sank into a chair. "Gone ! my dear Miss Hope—gone away !" She covered her face with her hands.

"You forget you are exposing these feelings," said Alice,

who had little indulgence for those weaknesses of the heart which she had herself subdued. "Let us go into another room." She drew Lilia's arm within hers, and walked, with a grave countenance and stately pace, into an apartment where they were alone.

Lilia could not raise her head. At last she said, "I do not attempt to disguise——" She leaned her head on the shoulder of her friend, and bitter tears moistened her eyes. "I am much ashamed of myself," she gasped out; "but I have—I did prefer Mr. Elphinstone to every one else in the world. If *that* is wrong, I am very wrong; and however the world may judge him, I can never forget him. Now, my dear Alice, I am quite well—quite well again. Do not think of what has passed between us. I will never mention his name again (she wept as she spoke) to any one."

"Then you will conscientiously try to get the better of so ill-judged and, I fear, ill-fated attachment?" said Alice, gravely.

Lilia shook her head. "It has been the happiness of my life—its great interest. It must, indeed, be a void when I resign *that;* but if no one knows it, if it makes no difference to any one, and especially since I am never to see him again, why should it be wrong?"

"If you are never to see him again! Yes, it is that—the absurdity, the utter hopelessness—that makes it even *criminal* for you, who ought to marry, and who will have opportunities of marrying well, to indulge it, my dear Lilia. I had no idea, my dear child," she added, kissing her cheek, "of so much indiscretion."

"I have never breathed it to a soul; and I can only repeat that I trust you will never commit me to any human being, especially to Mr. Hope. And now, dear Alice, tell me, for once, all you know about him. Where is he gone? and why? and what is to become of Hopewood?"

"Hopewood is resigned into my brother's hands. Mr. Elphinstone has behaved honourably—admirably; but Lilia, I ought not to disguise from you that he is now supposed to be the son of a common peasant, and not of Lady Janet Elphinstone. God knows what may be the result of the trial which is to take place."

"Could any one see him," cried Lilia, earnestly, "and think him the son of a peasant! Ah! dear Miss Hope, *never*! But be it as it may, he has qualities that will elevate any station!"

"I agree with you," said Miss Hope, struck by the burst of enthusiasm from one whom she had before but imperfectly understood; "but I earnestly entreat you to conquer what

seems to me a weakness. On this subject we will converse more to-morrow. Our absence will be remarked : and now let us go into the drawing-room."

She drew her friend with her, and whispering, as she went, an injunction to combat all betrayal of her feelings, she re-entered the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL.

THE party, of whom the preceding slight sketch has been given, remained for several days at Haskreton Hall: gradually, nevertheless, diminishing, until this change was by no means unacceptable.

Then came the true enjoyment of the place, the unfettered intercourse of minds congenial, the communion of the refined. For it were impossible, in the society of women whom they respected, to detect, either in Mr. Tracey, or in his friend Aylmer, the deadly profligacy which the world imputed to them. Lilia never thought about it. Miss Hope, better informed, rejected, from her strong prejudices, everything that could cast even a shadow upon the admired and admiring Tracey. Mr. Hope, more discerning, more anxious, had his suspicions. To rumours he attached little importance ; but he looked into the characters of these two gentlemen as men only can look. He observed, that in spite of youth, wealth, fortune, Tracey was restless and unhappy when unexcited ; he gazed on Aylmer's face, and perceived that, in the midst of laughter, joy was not there. These, and other observations, affected him, for the first time, towards Tracey ; and this was the last visit that Mr. Hope ever paid to Haskreton, and the friendship of years was broken by what he then remarked.

Above all things, the humble cousin, the melancholy Isabel, puzzled him. Something there was mysterious in her dejection, inexplicable in the understanding between her and Tracey. In company, she was the lowly, unanswering, yet not obsequious dependent. How happened it, then, that one morning Mr. Hope, suddenly entering the room, perceived her hand in that of Tracey's, and heard words addressed to her that sounded like those of passionate attachment ?

The singular conduct of Aylmer was not unnoticed by Mr.

Hope. He saw, yet not at once, for slowly came the conviction, that Aylmer's heart was deeply and hopelessly interested in Lilia; that he watched her with a melancholy that gave somewhat of elevation to a character not entitled to respect; that he strove to withdraw her, as Mr. Hope thought, to *save* her from Tracey. How far the observer of all these various persons was, in this, correct, time will discover.

A few days after her arrival at the hall, Lilia went down to the manor-house. As she entered the garden, the sight of Honora sitting down dejectedly in an arbour, not able to walk about, except in a circumscribed space, touched her conscience.

"My dear Honora," she cried, as she bounded towards her, "how wrong I was to leave you so long!"

"But you have had a charming visit," replied Honora, eagerly. "We all suppose that you are going to be married—that it must be so. Has Mr. Elphinstone spoken his mind yet?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"Then it must be Mr. Tracey. I have been thinking of nothing else. Lilia, the great wish of my heart is to see you really *well* married. I know you will never be able to endure home after all the society you have had, so caressed as you are by the Hopes and every one. I know it by experience."

She spoke in sadness.

"Dear Honora," answered Lilia, the tears moistening her beautiful eyes, "if ever I *have* a home, *you* shall have a happier home than this——" she checked herself, and sighed, involuntarily, yet so deeply, that a less acute ear than that of Honora would have discerned it.

"Why do you sigh?" cried the poor blind creature. "Oh, that I could but see you, Lilia! for you will not tell me if you are unhappy, I know. You haven't refused Mr. Elphinstone, Lilia?"

"Refused him! Oh, dear, no! Dear Honora, how can you be so absurd? Do not, I beg of you, allude to such nonsense. Nothing of the kind—nothing."

"But your hand trembles," urged Honora, whose hand held that of her sister. "If it *is* nonsense, what makes you tremble?"

"There is never hiding anything from you, Honora, if, indeed, I had any thing to hide," returned Lilia. "But I see William. I must go and speak to him."

She left Honora, sitting still, abstractedly, in a beautiful and, though the season was late, still sunny bower, the gorgeous hues of autumn around her, the last flowers shedding their petals on the emerald turf, yet unable to comprehend even the simplest beauties of that homely scene,—lost to all, save the

dim memories of long-past vision, and the sweet consciousness of sounds that conveyed to her mind some traces of that which she saw not. Hope, castle-building, were Honora's chief resource. The only gentle feature of her hard and hardening character was her love for Lilia, upon whose future fortunes her fancy was for ever working.

"Then it must be Mr. Tracey," she thought, as she turned her sightless eyes in the direction in which Lilia went. "The sooner Lilia marries the better. There is no peace for her here. And, though I should be left alone, yet," she added, her countenance and figure looking like the very image of desolation, "yet I am used to be alone. William, too," she reflected, as she caught the sound of his voice, "perhaps my father can then make some provision for him. A gentleman's son to have nothing! And nothing in prospect! Poor William! Yet he is always kind, and so contented!"

Meantime, Lilia was rapidly recounting to William all that had occurred *visibly* during her visit. Of the invisible world within, the heart, she said little, and William was far too scrupulous to ask her, and far too slow in the process of his ideas to comprehend her secret feelings. It was somewhat arduous to Lilia to snatch a glimpse of home in this manner. To see Honora desolate and neglected was sorrow enough; and William's mortifications and difficulties were humiliating to himself and trying to those who loved him. These little considerations, forgotten during an absence from home, came trebly upon Lilia, and of this kind were they.

"It would have been very polite, very kind, in my Lord Ravenspur to have asked me to dinner while you stayed, and a condescension," said William, "though I am not fond of condescension; but then, you see, I have no opportunity of returning any civility; it is, therefore, better not to receive it. I am afraid I must hurry away, Lilia; my father wanted me, I know, half an hour since, to settle about some draining. You know he has sold the hunters? Very right—but a man who does not hunt soon gets out of society. But do not let it vex you, dearest Lilia. *I* am not vexed. Good-by. Come home, looking a little more blooming, for you certainly are pale, Lilia."

Lilia looked affectionately after his receding figure, as he tore himself from her.

"Dear, dear William!" she exclaimed; "how little he thinks of himself—how much of me!"

She went in to pay her respects to her stepmother.

"So there is no doubt that Miss Purdillion has a chance of refusing Mr. Tracey!" was the first exclamation. "And, of

course, she will never marry! No; her mind is altogether set upon other things. But I hear not a day passes without her receiving an offer. She was asked by a friend of mine, who shall be nameless, 'How many she had had?' 'Ah, my dear,' she replied, 'I never count them!' But the notes and compliments she has from Mr. Tracey *would* entertain you."

"She will have an uncommonly pretty fortune," said Uncle Humphrey, who was present; "but I declare, even I would not have her. Why, 'tis like wedding the parson himself in female clothes."

Mrs. Howard looked at him contemptuously, "*You!*" Then added, "'Tis our wash-day. You'll pardon me, Lilia, since you're at home here."

After a lengthened discussion from Uncle Humphrey, telling her the fortunes and misfortunes, the characters and the no-characters of those with whom she had been associating, Lilia prepared to walk back to the hall, William seeing her to the great entrance of the park, and then retreating, he left her to pursue her road alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COURT OF SESSIONS.

At that very hour Bernard Elphinstone was standing in the Parliament Chamber of Edinburgh: there, where life-like—as if the accents which persuaded or incensed, the words which were to many, fate, still hung upon his lips—the sculptured figure of the great Forbes is seen, his arm out-stretched, his garments almost as if trembling with the mental energy long silenced for ever. But little, amid the throng who then crowded into that chamber, did any one regard that wondrous and living stone. All were intent upon one theme. Those who had succeeded in forcing their way into the adjacent court were busy in rehearsing the proceedings of the day to those who had not gained admittance. A tale of marvellous interest was there told: the thoughts, the language, the letters of the dead had been raked up for the interests of the living: like a foretaste of eternal retribution, the sins, and even the errors of those who slept in the tomb, had been fearfully disclosed—heard in astonishment and trembling. The event still rested on the separate decrees of the Fourteen Lords of

Council and Session, who sat in the dark and densely-crowded court, to which the now disused Parliament Chamber seems as a vestibule.

As the ever-moving crowds passed to and fro, the attention of many among them was excited by one figure standing apart from the mass. It was that of the young man whose fate was to be determined by the result of the long and tedious process which had, in different forms, been carried on for months. He had been in court, and had been attentively listening to the proceedings—had suddenly rushed out, and had now returned. His fine, though anxious countenance, his drooping yet noble figure, gave that interest to his fate which is felt when a handsome performer takes the main part in a drama, but which is but feebly excited by an ordinary and elderly actor.

"Mr. Elphinstone," said a gentleman, who, as the bystanders guessed, was one of the unfortunate young man's former guardians, "let me recommend you to go home. You have now been three whole days in court, and to-morrow the judgment begins; that, of course, will keep you here."

"I assure you, my lord," returned Bernard Elphinstone, "with much deference, that it was a momentary illness. I felt confused, and, against my will—almost persuaded that I was what I am not."

A melancholy smile passed over his countenance as he spoke; and as he now, while speaking to the peer, stood with his hat off, the changed expression of his countenance—the brow, formerly so smooth, now so furrowed—might be observed.

"So you expect your brother here to-day?" inquired his friend.

"No: I have written to him. He will not come," was the reply, in a voice that went to the heart of him who had made the inquiry.

"So you feel well enough to return to the court, then?" resumed the nobleman, addressing Bernard.

"Perfectly."

The two gentlemen then moved towards the end of the Parliament Chamber. The crowd drew back and gave them room. There was a general respect to the sorrows and injuries of the younger man—injuries, because it was now industriously circulated, and generally credited, that he had been furtively carried off from his parents, who were in a low sphere, and introduced as the son of a lady of the highest rank, from the worst and most sordid motives. Yet, mixed with this conviction, there was a strange confusion of the real and the

unreal; still a sort of notion prevailed that the claimant of the Elphinstone property was a man of high descent. His figure, his air, his courtesy, distant as were his manners, and the involuntary respect which his deportment inspired, begot this confusion. Those who were the most opposed to his *authenticity* (to use such a phrase), still called him by the name of Elphinstone.

The court was going to rise soon, and the advocate was finishing his oration as Elphinstone and his friend, after standing in the doorway for some moments, gradually edged their way in. Then the ill-starred subject of this long and memorable litigation heard, with emotions only checked by a powerful effort—and yet somewhat deadened by the frequency of repetition and proof which they had already, in the course of the last few days, undergone—the narrative of his own existence, before he could comprehend to what misery it was destined.

His mother—the gentle, the noble, the pure—she who had, on her death-bed, called him to her night after night, thinking that ere the morning her days of sorrow would be closed in death—she who had solemnly recommended him to the protection of God, for man, she said, was against him—she who bade him take a sword in his hand, and distinguish himself as his ancestors had done—she was the subject of that harangue which every ear was strained to hear.

Lady Janet, such was the evidence, aided by one confidential servant, had carried on a scheme of imposture the most audacious, the most extraordinary, that had ever been attempted. She had never known a mother's hopes, pangs, nor joys, but had—and so the most indisputable proofs served to establish—feigned all that must precede, or that must succeed that event which was to give to the house of Elphinstone an heir. Then had she, through the lowest emissaries, searched into the vilest precincts of Paris: she had worked upon the poverty and the depravity of two wretched persons employed in the glass manufactory of that capital, to give her, for a sum of money, their child, whom she had passed off upon the world as her own, born in wedlock, by Sir John Stewart, her husband. Such was the birth of Bernard Elphinstone. Oaths, depositions, the revered testimony of holy men, the solemn asseverations of the confessional, were adduced to prove it, and to blast for ever the happiness and prosperity of the young man who stood and listened to those frightful details of imposture.

In the faubourg St. Antoine, the eastern outskirts of Paris, in a wretched cabaret, peculiarly miserable, even for that low

part of the capital, was a nest of five families, who had been called forth to give their depositions to the extraordinary tale. Among these witnesses, the celebrated Maria Mignon bore a conspicuous part. This woman and her husband, impelled by their poverty, had, during the very year of Bernard Elphinstone's birth, sold their eldest child to foreigners; an old wretch named Margot was the medium of the infamous transaction; the infant was taken away by a lady and gentleman well dressed, and speaking English, or, as Maria deposed, a foreign language; and the child, being attired in superb clothes, and its old habiliments left to its parents, was never more seen by them. Long had this story slumbered, but it was now miraculously brought to the light, just when required for the purposes of justice, or for the interests of Mr. Elphinstone's adversary. Oaths plentiful as autumnal leaves, revelations before holy fathers, particulars so constructed and so combined that they could not be forged, verified these statements. The assembled spectators who heard this singular tale looked with one accord towards the subject of the imposture: a look of confusion and surprise, and then of contempt and incredulity, settled over his countenance; once a shudder of disgust shook his frame;—then it became erect and defying. That part of the topic so ably handled by the advocate was now finished: *his* case was discussed; that of his younger brother was then begun.

The narrative of Sholto's birth was even yet more appalling. Afraid, it was presumed, that her hopes might still fail, should sickness of any kind carry off the elder child, resolved to secure the estates of Elphinstone, impelled by the most dauntless effrontery to complete her purpose, Lady Janet and her confederates had resolved to repeat the offence already committed, by the purchase or theft of another infant, who was to personify the younger brother of the child whom she had already acquired. One day the curé of a parish in the lowest parts of Paris was applied to on the part of a charitable lady, who wished to be kind to poor housekeepers with children, to specify some objects. He complied with the request, and introduced to them a vagrant and his wife, who had just given birth to a son. This little being was taken to this charitable lady, whom circumstantial evidence pointed out as Lady Janet Stewart. Her husband, or a gentleman who accompanied her, purchased the infant for eighteen livres. In a few days, the parents had sought to reclaim their child, but it was of no avail. The unknown purchaser had decamped with it, and for years no trace had been discovered; at last, by the industry of legal inquiries, this infant was identified

with Sholto, the younger son of Lady Janet. The latter part of the elaborate harangue, in which these facts were stated, was, indeed, lost to him whom they most concerned; he had borne the humiliations attached to his own name comparatively well; he had recovered their first effect, and stood in manly composure, though before all who gazed upon him; but, when summed up with exquisite skill, the evidence of Sholto's birth began to assume a credible and consistent form, he drew his hand across his eyes, and seemed borne down with the exquisite agony of that moment.

"At all events, they are brothers," whispered one advocate, who was observing him, to another.

"Admirable acting!" replied the person thus addressed.

"Then there is no more of it—he is gone," was the rejoinder.

Before these words were uttered, Bernard was without the door of the Parliament Chamber, and breathing more freely, he stood within the narrow square entitled the Parliament Close, for a few moments, as if to recover recollection. Then he darted off among the crowd, and was soon lost to view, down the picturesque street which had reminded him in calmer hours of the continental towns with which his infancy had been familiar. He soon entered one of those close and dingy courts, or wynds, than which the old town of Edinburgh has nothing more curious to present. He plunged into the depths of one of these intricate retreats.

The wynds were at that time the residence of persons of condition; but she whom Bernard Elphinstone sought was of lowly fortunes. He stopped at the foot of a common stair, and, after a momentary pause, in which a deep-drawn sigh was heard, rushed up towards a chamber situate, as it seemed, well nigh at the summit of a house of six or seven stories; he stopped, and knocked gently at the door of one of the suite of rooms in that ultimate region.

After some hesitation, he was answered, and a face under a muffler glared upon him: it was that of an ancient gentlewoman, whose attributes of gentility were somewhat in the past tense, her black silk mode, her muslin apron, and her lutestring skirt being all of a state of decline and fall; and she looked grimly and answered gruffly, in an accent half Scottish, half French, "if you will come in, you must;" and, looking behind her, she added, "she's very ill to-day, don't fash her;" but the young man rushed past her, and, making his way to the fireplace, sank upon his knees before an object there.

"Helen! dear Helen! dear, kind mother!" he eagerly exclaimed, do you not know me? He clasped two fragile hands which were folded together as he spoke; it was no

young nor lovely object that he addressed, but a poor, shrunken, frail, and aged form, wrapped up in flannels, and immersed in a great leathern chair, and dosing away life, after its fever, which had, indeed, to her been a fitful and a weary one. As she heard the voice which she well knew, she revived somewhat from her dreamy state, and a smile gleamed for a moment over her features.

"Rouse yourself! arouse every faculty!" cried the young man impetuously; "for those whom you have known, and nursed—for her"—his voice fell to a whisper—"who is in the tomb. Rouse yourself, I say! Helen, *am* I an impostor? Were my parents guilty of a crime which——my God, give me patience! Am I, Helen Hewit—am I the son of that wretch Mignon? Answer me, and save me from a cursed and intolerable existence! Speak, Helen, speak, for I *will* know!"

"Lord bless you!" interposed the woman who had opened the door, "she has said it. It is on oath—before the Lord Justiciary; and she can say no more."

"But is it *true?* Helen, assure me, now, an aged and dying woman as you are, on your hopes of salvation, say that your depositions were true;—true, Helen, true!" he added, with an impetuosity that defied all control; and, addressing himself to the wandering eye of the feeble being whose hands he grasped, "True," he repeated, as one possessed by frenzy; "true, Helen, *true?*"

"They should have asked me," answered the aged woman, feebly, "while my memory served me; for now,"—her accents began to falter, and a tear dimmed her eye—"there have been so many things said and done; and all is confusion *here.*" She pointed to her forehead, and, closing her eyes, seemed as if desirous of ending the subject.

"It is on record from her own lips," again interposed the female friend, "that she confirmed before the minister what she had stated on oath. Do not again disturb a dying woman."

"And for Sholto! for your favourite! the darling of his mother! will you not," pursued Bernard, still addressing Mrs. Hewit, "once, once more, oh, Helen! say that he is not of vile birth—not the base child of a wretched vagrant? For him, Helen, arouse yourself, if not for me!"

The aged person, long the attendant and confidant of Lady Janet Stewart, did arouse herself to the best of her faculties. She started forward, and, with a scared look, exclaimed, "Sholto! Who harms him?" Then, a smile lighting up even the passionless expression of age, she said, "No one can mistake him! He the son of a vagrant! Sholto! Never! But don't weary me," she added in a feeble tone. She put her hand

to her forehead, and repeating, "They should have come to me sooner; they should have asked me while my memory served me," she sank back exhausted, and almost fainting in her chair.

Bernard arose from his kneeling position, and looked upon that pallid face and nerveless form. How mixed were his emotions! Old age seemed to rob him at that moment of the only living and sure witness of his birth—all else were in their graves. The doctor who had attended Lady Janet in France was no more; his wife but indistinctly remembered hearing of his patients, and could offer no trace of having heard of any foreign lady whom he had visited. Isabel Walker, whose examination had delayed the proceedings of the Court of Session, had not been with Lady Janet at the birth of her children, but had nursed them when a few months old.

Poignant regrets and disappointed hopes were not the only feelings which engrossed Bernard Elphinstone at that moment. The sight of that aged and wrinkled face took him back, for a few brief instants, to his infancy, of which her image had formed a prominent feature, to the days of maternal tenderness and of unconsciousness. Who does not recall such remembrance at some epoch of sorrow, or crisis of destiny?

The attending friend of the aged Mrs. Hewit was hanging over her scarcely breathing frame whilst these transient reminiscences came and went: she was bathing with vinegar the damp and cold brows. As she performed this office she looked at Bernard, and, pointing to the door, motioned him to withdraw. "Would you kill the woman?" she asked, significantly. "The spark is well-nigh out; do not you put it out. She will be herself again to-morrow."

"Promise me," replied Bernard, solemnly, "that you will send to me when she recovers; promise me also that you will write down whatever she may say concerning me or mine. On these conditions only will I withdraw."

"Lord, sir! would I do other? Go, go; and be certain that when she asks for you I will send for you."

"I will go, then," answered Elphinstone. He turned away; yet, ere he went, took one long, earnest, *mournful* look at the fast sinking form near the fireplace.

* * * * * *

That night, at Haskreton, gay sounds of voices, and notes of music, and bursts of laughter, were heard. Happy was it for Lilia that she had not Aunt Margaret's mirror to view, yet not to aid, the distant trials of one whose image was often before her view.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DECISION.

During many days the unfortunate Bernard Elphinstone wandered about the vicinity of Edinburgh, in the course of which the judgment of his cause was given.

It was unfavourable. With what fortitude he bore that decision; how his character rose in the estimation of those who then saw him; how greatly it was strengthened in this stern contest with adversity, those who were doomed to convey to him the result could testify; and to their minds, his lofty bearing conveyed a conviction of his gentle birth and early good-breeding, which it were difficult for all the fiats of all the Lords of Session in Christendom (I speak it with reverence) to set aside.

"The judges," said his friend, the nobleman who had been his guardian, "were equally divided." He paused, and added, "in such cases, the President of the Council has a casting vote; he has manifested throughout a decided leaning to your adversary, and——"

"Do not be afraid to tell me," cried Bernard, filling up the pause, "that which I guess. I would fain spare you this disclosure," he added, pressing heartily the hands of his friend. "It went against me: I know it."

Lord ——— was silent.

"I anticipated it," resumed Elphinstone, with calmness, "and the rather that this morning—an ill omen—news were brought me that Helen Hewit, my mother's attendant, died during the last night." He bit his lip, and checking, by a strong effort, the starting tear, as he added, "her loss would have been great to me at any time, but now——Well, well, all is over!"

There was a profound silence for some time; no consolation was attempted, and kind was that forbearance by Lord ——. "What are your plans?" was his next question.

"To go abroad, when I have once seen my brother, and arranged with him his future life. Sholto has talents; I trust he will choose some honourable profession. *I* have always, as your lordship knows, had that predilection for a military life which has characterised all my ——" ancestors, he was about

to say, but recollecting himself with a sharp pang, the word died away on his lips.

A long important conference occupied the greater part of that night after the trial. It was almost daybreak when Bernard, taking a solemn leave of the kind friend who had so gallantly, yet so fruitlessly, fought his battles, issued forth to make preparations for his departure from the fatal scene of his ruin and disgrace. The air was wintry, yet the sun was rising in splendour over that dim island in the Frith of Forth, which seemed like a blue line on the sun-lit ocean. The repose of that slumbering city was complete, for it was a Sabbath morning ; and the streets of the old town—the most picturesque in the British islands, so replete with memories of the great, the turbulent, the lettered, and the unfortunate —resounded not with the church bells which are rung at dawn in our southern towns, but were as silent as they were deserted.

Shivering and disconsolate, and as if awakening from a dream, Bernard Elphinstone crossed the churchyard of the Grey Friars, and almost envied the tranquil sleepers in that grim inclosure, rich, even then, with the remains of those who were their country's boast. He stopped for a few instants, and gazed mournfully upon those tombs whose inscriptions spoke of deeds of fame, or referred to long ancestry, or recorded the annals of a life prematurely closed. Despair was the prevailing fiend at that moment. A grave, newly made, bore on its summit the epitaph to one of early doom. "Such will be mine," said the unhappy young man to himself. "No—no trophies are there for me ! How can I, the—the offspring of —but no, let me not insult the memory of one who looks down at this moment pitying, perhaps, her child. Mother ! my mother !" he exclaimed aloud, in the deep silence of that inclosure, "in the presence only of the dead, let *your* smile rest on me !" He raised his eyes to heaven ; the skies, though wintry, were now glowing with the glorious hues of dawn. A sensation of warmth, a feeling of hope were imparted by that sublime spectacle—those rosy tints which fell upon the darkest winds, and penetrated even to recesses almost too remote for the sunbeam—or for that hope of which it is typical—to penetrate.

In one of these courts, so peculiar to Edinburgh, so curious, yet often so loathsome, so pregnant with disease and dirt, Bernard then walked, more composedly ; for he had a solemn duty to fulfil ; *there* lay the remains of Helen Hewit. She had been greatly prized, indeed beloved by Lady Janet Elphinstone, whose dying charge to her son had been "ever to remember

poor Helen." On her evidence had he been enabled, when he served himself heir, to use the Scottish phrase, to his uncle, to assert that claim; and although all that she had solemnly sworn had been in vain, he felt that *she* had been faithful to *her* trust, confided by Lady Janet—"to make the truth known."

He rang the bell of the common stair, for he felt dizzy and confused; and as if another entrance into the close room in which Helen had died—another view of that withered and shrunken form—would sicken him almost to death. In a few moments, the aged companion of Mrs. Hewitt peeped down from above on the intruder.

"Is it you? Hey dear! and betimes too! *Hélas! Mon enfant*, will you not come up, my dear, and see the corpse? 'Tis a beautiful corpse."

"I have no time; I only called, Mrs. Hepburn, to say here are the means of paying for poor Mrs. Hewitt's burial. It cannot be by my mother's grave, for she," he added, forgetting for the moment all that had occurred, "lies buried at Holywood, with our ancestors; but let it be decent; and, doubtless, Helen named the place."

"Yes, yes; in the Canongate; near your good father, Sir John," returned the woman.

Bernard was silent for a moment, then said, "I shall probably never see Scotland again; you will not fail to employ this money as *I* wish—as she wished. I would it were more; but I have some grievous burdens to discharge." The woman, Mrs. Hepburn, had now descended nearer to him. "And they dare," she whispered, yet rage shook her frame as she spoke, "to disinherit you from your rights. Oh that Helen Hewit was alive to hear it! Nay, it may well nigh call her from her very grave. By-the-by, sir, would you not like to inspect her papers, and memorials, and the like?"

"No, no, I have no time; I am sick of papers and memorials; and they can do no good."

"Cannot they? Who knows that? But the right will out; and that's fate," rejoined Mrs. Hepburn. "But when you come next to these parts——"

Bernard shook his head. "Farewell!" he said emphatically. "Poor aged creature! take this money for her sake, to whom you were kind; and tell me should you ever be distressed, for happen what may, you shall never want."

He placed some money in her hands, and walked with a heavy heart away, gazing upwards at the narrow lattice, high above all passengers, and opened, the curtain blowing about with the wind, and telling the tale that all care for the suf-

ferer was at an end. The precaution of the opened windows was for the survivors.

News travelled slowly in those days; and, before the result of that cause which decreed the Elphinstones to penury and disgrace had reached Haskreton, various contradictory rumours had excited the good and evil passions of the former neighbours of the unfortunate young men.

Rumours about the probable termination of the Elphinstone cause were the general theme of conversation. Lord Ravenspur was deeply interested in the result; and the anxiety for the next day's newspaper was not confined to Lilia alone.

"I remember their mother," said his lordship, speaking one day of those who had so unwillingly acquired celebrity—"a remarkably fine woman—in an assembly at Edinburgh."

"Their mother! pardon me, my lord," said Tracey, who was playing piquet with Miss Hope; "you must have gone into a vile cabaret first—in Paris." He glanced at Lilia as he spoke.

"Well, then, their reputed mother. I will not say the handsomest woman of her time; but she was the most graceful and polished certainly. Poor Lady Janet!"

"Your reminiscences are touching, my lord," observed Tracey, slily. "Her sons—as we must call them till the next paper arrives—and then, I think, you'll find the question settled—do not resemble her in person, I should conceive." His searching eye was fixed on Lilia as he spoke.

To the man who had rarely been foiled in the pursuit of woman's love, there was something irritating in her melancholy, absorbed air. A deep sigh near him caught Tracey's attention at this untimely moment. He turned round, but she who had uttered that sigh meekly, and instantly, retreated; and, shrinking once more into herself, Isabel Tracey took her remote station at the middle of the room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUITABLE PROPOSAL.

At last Lilia returned home.

"You are thinner, dear!" cried her father, as he kissed her.

"And paler," added William, anxiously.

"And, my dear, how your best silk is worn!" cried Mrs. Howard,

"Madam," interposed Uncle Humphrey, smilingly, "where she has been she must needs wear her silks every day."

"Lilia," exclaimed Honora, "where are you? come to me! I do not perceive (and, as she spoke, she passed her hand over the fair face of her sister) that you are thinner. Tell me how she looks," she cried, turning to Uncle Humphrey.

"Haggard, that's all; and no wonder, sitting up at nights and drinking green tea. I'll be bound——but bless me, who comes here? A funeral procession—I'll take myself off." Yet he stayed; for the curiosity of the bachelor-uncle was insatiable.

The funeral procession stopped at the door before Uncle Humphrey had buttoned up the last button of his spencer.

"'Tis—it is, I declare, by all that's sensible and saintly, Miss Purdillion's! Sister, here's your friend, the heiress! Bless me, how old she looks! and how fat her horses are! I shouldn't like to pay her corn-chandler's bill. Though, to be sure, she only uses them once a-year. And, I observe—sure she has changed her small boy with the corduroys, for a full-sized footman with epaulettes. I hope she feeds him well. Look here, sister, at the epaulettes!"

While this running commentary was going on, folds upon folds of black caape, yards and dozens of yards of widow's lawn, and breadths of fine bombazine were slowly emerging from the carriage in hypocritical array, and presently swam in two figures up to the eyes in affliction, if affliction can be measured, made up, and paid for.

They came in, with a silent sorrow that defied incredulity, Miss Purdillion giving a black silk hand round in hopeless grief to the circle individually, and being "as well as could be expected;" for the due time, for "cheerful resignation" had not arrived. Miss Hartley dared not say much; but she squeezed all hands, and, pointing to her patroness, indicated that the attentions of all must be coupled with extreme and silent consideration.

Mr. Howard was a plain-spoken man. "My good madam," he shouted, addressing Miss Purdillion, "stay and eat your mutton with us. Come, I'll take no denial! Hasn't he been dead these three weeks, my dear?" he inquired of his wife.

"My dear sir—my dear, dear sir!" answered Miss Purdillion, "we don't measure sorrow by time. Ah, no! Time! what have we to do with time? poor passengers and pilgrims, as I may say."

"You've some good horses there," interrupted Mr. Howard, who, being a matter-of-fact man, took her up literally: "did

those belong to the late Mr. Thomas Purdillion? my old friend, whom I used to sit next to on the grand jury."

"They are, indeed, his precious, precious relics," sighed Miss Purdillion, "treasures, I may say, and treasured. They are subject to cold! and, therefore, you must allow us to withdraw before evening. We have, indeed, another call of duty to make—she looked down;—at the hall—a parcel of books to leave for Mr. Tracey, who has been a friend to us in our affliction—a friend untold!"

"I should think so," said Uncle Humphrey, "he's a very good friend, ma'am, wherever there's property, or the hopes of property."

"I listen to no scandal!" cried Miss Purdillion, extending her hand. "Dear, dear sir! let us not misjudge our fellow-men."

—"Especially the young and handsome ones," muttered Uncle Humphrey, turning to the window. "Why, you can't make him out much worse than he is. I believe, ma'am, there you're right."

Miss Hartley leaned forward anxiously. "He forgets," she whispered to Mrs. Howard, "how cruelly he outrages her feelings."

"Her feelings! so!" muttered Uncle Humphrey, "I thought how it was!" whilst a glance of surprise ran round the circle. Honora alone did not comprehend it.

—"His desire for spiritual guidance," Miss Purdillion was whispering, meantime, to her friend, "is such, that he even confides it into the hands of poor, poor me!"

"Well, but then who is so proper?" interrupted Mrs. Howard, eagerly.

"Indeed, it *is* a privilege," echoed Miss Hartley, "to have *her* advice."

"By your leave, my dear friend, I will retire; my spirits are weak, and I have a little affair to settle, of a worldly nature indeed, but we must sometimes lend ourselves to them," said Miss Purdillion, and rising, she took the arm of her friend, and quitted the room, downcast as she entered, a year's sorrow being at least expressed in her manner of egress.

She retired into Mrs. Howard's own parlour, a little wainscoted room, adorned with files of bills aloft, and set off by sundry pots of preserves on shelves. "The Complete Cook" lay on the table; an almanac was over the chimney-piece, on which stood an hour-glass.

"This is where I retire, my dear," said Mrs. Howard, "when I want a little quiet, and to have my own things to

myself, and all my employments about me ; and we open into the store-closet," she added, indicating a door to her approving friend.

"All very charming ; and," cried the heiress, "I am now going to enter upon a forbidden theme." She drew her veil close as she spoke ; "can you guess what ?"

"Really, no." Mrs. Howard looked puzzled. "A forbidden theme ! can it be marriage ?"

"It is, indeed ; you have, perhaps, observed—indeed it has been perceptible to everybody——"

"Mr. Tracey's attentions are quite evident !" cried Mrs. Howard.

"My dear friend, you overwhelm me with confusion. No. Oh ! no ! my thoughts are for others. And can this disconsolate heart forget so soon the image of my cousin Thomas ; a little more time, my dear friend, for sorrow."

"As you think right," replied Mrs. Howard, "Marriage !—there's so little talk of it in our family. Honora is out of the question, and Lilia seems to me to have missed it, somehow."

"My cousin Matthew," Miss Purdillion resumed, "has set his fancy upon your daughter, Miss Lilia. Matthew's a man whose preference does honour, if we poor human creatures *can* receive honour—on any woman. He's so superior *in* parts to most young men ; and the man, my dear friend, should ever be superior to the woman."

"That is true," answered Mrs. Howard, profoundly ; "and I am sure I look up to Mr. Howard. We will call him in, if you please, for I leave all such things to him." So saying, she disappeared for a few moments ; and presently the seven-leagued boots of Mr. Howard were heard coming into the council-room. He was a man of little sentiment, an arbitrary bashaw of a father, such as young ladies have no notion of in the present day ;—a father, in short, of the last century, who thought of marrying off his daughter, and selling his stock of sheep, at the next fair, in the same moment, and with much the same emotions ; indeed, I am not sure whether South Down, then very valuable stock, had not more of his heart than any daughters.

Miss Purdillion chastely and succinctly put the case before him ; her cousin Matthew—his very superior character, and the society he had moved in ; his incipient love for her spiritual discourse ; his even distributing her last set of tracts himself ; to say nothing of his very obliging temper ; and, as to the means of worldly comforts—for, alas ! in our fallen state, we look to such things—his now very independent fortune.

Mr. Howard interrupted her here.

"You have come to the point, good madam; Lilia shall have him. I should like to see his solicitor first, you know, before the young people settle it entirely."

"What is the name of his firm? Is it Harris and Williams, or Williams and Harris?"

"But, my dear sir," Miss Purdillion remonstrated, "not so fast; for marriage," she added, with a sweet consciousness, "is a holy rite, as we have authority for saying, and must be slowly and carefully engaged in. My cousin Matthew is in no hurry; indeed, I believe he wishes to take a course of the Bath waters, *Deo volente*, before anything decisive takes place."

"Indeed! madam. Then what the devil would he be at?" asked Mr. Howard, his stentorian voice filling the little room, and shaking down the paper fire-screens,—his hands in his pockets,—his face a glowing red. He! a man of so coarse a mould, to decide the delicate emotions of the heart, on which the happiness of a lifetime hinges! It was like a butcher handling a lamb previous to slaying the innocent.

"He wishes," replied Miss Purdillion, her spirit rising, "to pay his addresses."

"Very good! Quite what you did yourself, Mr. Howard," said Mrs. Howard.

"His addresses! What's that? However, ladies, I don't profess to understand these things, though I've been married twice. I never paid any addresses that I know of. I spoke my mind, and there was an end of it: neither of the ladies were difficult."

Mrs. Howard looked offended, and began fanning herself with a newspaper. Her anger gave her words. "All Mr. Matthew wants," she said, breathlessly, "Mr. Howard, is to be allowed to visit and address Lilia; it will be a sort of ——;" she looked at Miss Purdillion for the aid of an expression suited to the delicacy of the subject.

"Oh! if it is like taking a servant on trial, I understand it," cried Mr. Howard, taking his hands out of his pockets with a cheerful air. "They'll do, I dare say, upon further acquaintance. Lilia's a good-tempered girl. I wish I could say the same for Honora; but, then, Honora has the sense. She's like *me*. Well, ladies, manage it your own way: only don't be talking to me about it all day, Mrs. Howard, as you used to do about our own wedding." He then posted out of the room with the same gawky dispatch he had entered.

The ladies were left to a consultation. It was agreed that

Mr. Matthew should have the run of the house; which Mrs. Howard afterwards found out was a scheme of Miss Purdillion's for getting rid of him herself, and transferring his society to another. Nothing was to be said to Lilia; both the ladies deemed it more proper—certainly more prudent and more delicate—to let her find out his sentiments herself; both agreeing that he was sure to prove irresistible, for notions of what is, and what is not, irresistible, vary in this world. Mutual felicitations followed on the expected ties of relationship on the one side, and on the anticipated comfort of having an additional spare room on the other; "for really, my dear friend," whispered Mrs. Howard to her friend, in a mysterious passage between her parlour and the drawing-room, "those pink hangings in the best bedroom are wearing out terribly."

A profound silence was maintained respecting this interview; the carriage was still standing at the door, and Uncle Humphrey was still looking at the horses, when the ladies returned. Soon were Miss Purdillion and Miss Hartley entombed within their vehicle; and, like a cloud from the north-east, as it came, so it went.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

What is that German novel in which the hero is destined always to have a shadow, not a natural shadow, but a double self, pursuing for ever his weary and perplexed steps? I know not a more cruel condition.

Lilia was doomed to experience it in its perfection for weeks, nor could she understand wherefore. Every day, now, there was a long intriguing between Mrs. Howard and her cook on the subject of new sweets—on the principle of sweets to the sweet, I presume—as the interesting Matthew dined at the manor daily. Every day William was ordered to get up the old port out of the bin *A*. A certain cap of Mrs. Howard's, and a "neck" of Mechlin were brought out daily; the best china was taken out, together with curious decanters that had not seen the light for a year or more; and a set of ale-glasses, Mrs. Howard's own, with twisted stems, the breaking of one of which had been a fit of hysterics to her, were now produced *ad libitum*.

All this meant something: and then there was a regularity in the way of going on, which meant something too. Mr. Matthew's "addresses" were not intermittent; they were chronic, with paroxysms as fixed as the moon's changes. He came in at eleven, and loitered about, looking his "addresses," for he had not quite made up his mind to speak them; he was seeing how he could like the lady. His mode of paying attentions was after the received models; bringing verses written out from the "Elegant Extracts," to read, with—"An't they pretty—do you think them so? I thought you would—they're so remorkably pawetical."

Love and idleness, they say, are akin; but they are very inconvenient combinations: in this case, there was the idleness without the love. Honora sat at her tatting, as usual; but Lilia was never suffered to withdraw. She was the daily martyr of these never-ending visits. *Tête-à-têtes* were not proper, and Honora was seduced into the little parlour, to play the third part in the drama, looking upon a delicious lawn, where the sisters sometimes sat; but if Lilia took refuge in her own room, there was instantly a message sent from Mrs. Howard to fetch her down. Not even flight to the rookery near the house would do. She was watched by a confidential housemaid, who gave intelligence to Mrs. Howard, and Mr. Purdillion was sent after her. If she went to the village, the footboy pursued her with, "Please, Miss, you're wanted." There was no sanctuary for her vexed spirit—retreat was cut off.

It was Christmas time, and the festivities of family parties were going on, and the dolorous necessity of being merry then prevailed. The company, at most of the dinners and dances, were like an often served up dish—the same, with variations. You dined at the vicar's one day, and met the Haskreton Manor people, with the Thornhills of Thornhill, or the Smiths and Pattesons. You dined with the Pattesons the next day, and met the vicar and the Smiths, and the Haskreton people. It was that misery of miseries, a sociable neighbourhood. If a neighbourhood happens to be unsociable, you have something to grumble at. You have the comfort of thinking it very hard, of believing that if certain families were away, things would be better. You are very ungrateful if you do not enjoy a sociable neighbourhood.

The Pattesons were the most sociable and popular people near Haskreton, and formed the leading feature of that second set which comes up to the relief from grandeur, in aristocratic neighbourhoods. They were esteemed the happy family. We talk of the unhappiness of the world; but we

forget the Patteson tribe. They were all musical, and they all danced. The father and mother danced, the old grandfather even danced. The daughters and sons sung duets, and each played a different instrument. Something was always going on there: they were immersed in a round of amusements while every one else was dull. They took advantage of everything; the business of their lives was to attend races and balls; they were always going to parties, to concerts, some twenty miles off, and having a "great deal of fun" at fairs. They were all plain; but the laugh of the Miss Pattesons' was the signal for merriment everywhere. The father and mother never grew any older; indeed, there were the seeds of long life in all the family.

They gave a Christmas dinner. It was to be something extremely refined and exclusive, for the Pattesons began to take up, and to think that they had made themselves *too* popular, in visiting persons whom the vicar and his wife did not visit, and who were not tolerated by the Smiths. Their gentility went much against the grain; but they left out these proscribed wretches,—or invited them, if I mistake not, to a second banquet, a revival of the first dinner.

How beautiful poor Lilia looked that evening—the prelude to one of the first misfortunes of her life! How glossy were her tresses! how delicate was the hue of that neck and throat which they adorned! How simple, yet how graceful was her deportment! to which even the careless air of reverie, the now rare, yet sweet smile, gave an additional interest.

The turning out of a party to dinner is agony. William, too, had one defect—he was never ready. His habit of not going up to dress till the last bell rang was his only inveterate fault, and nearly maddened his father. Then, poor William! he who was doomed to meet the severest trials in life, made small matters a daily trial. He had no just confidence in his waistcoats, no due reliance on the manly sit of his collars. He was given to suspicions of buttons being off behind, and had unreasonable opinions on the possibility of that perfection in blacking which the sub's sub, who operated on his dress shoes, could never realise. He was the most nervous man alive when full dressed, although perhaps the least vain, that I ever knew.

Mr. Howard was calling out for him, walking up and down, with a very creaking pair of shoes, himself, for half an hour before William could be induced to leave his bedroom, and to appear, flushed, shy, dissatisfied, yet bearing the air of a gentleman in every sense, in the hall. Mrs. Howard was already in the coach: Lilia just stepping in, the party was complete; and after a quarter of an hour's lecture on punctuality from

Mr. Howard to William, quite thrown away—the only plan would have been to have left him behind for once (the heads of families should do it once a-year to their young men and maidens)—the carriage turned into the main road.

"A nice evening this," shouted Mr. Howard, cooling down a little and coming round, yet still somewhat irritated, "for a long drive! I wonder what makes people give dinners at this time o' the year."

"It may be custom," said William, timidly, and anxiously settling his knee-ties.

"Custom! Then customs should be changed, sir," shouted Mr. Howard. "Is it sleet, pray, or rain?"

There was little inducement, by opening the window, to make the inquiry by observation, yet Mr. Howard was letting down the glass, when Mrs. Howard remonstrated, saying rather sharply, "Not this side, my dear."

Lilia, who was desirous of promoting any theme to save William's feelings, then said, "I will let down this window," and she put her head out. She was so long in her inspection of the skies that the whole party began to shiver, and her father's natural impatience burst forth. "Lord bless the child! does she take half an hour to know whether it is sleet or rain? Now tell us, if you please, which it is."

"Sleet—rain! I—I forgot to look," returned Lilia, with an absent air; "but, at all events, it is over now," she added, with a smile, that reconciled every one to her; even Mrs. Howard, whose black and red brocade had a spot or two of rain on it. The fact was, that as she gazed out upon the road, a figure caught Lilia's attention, and was instantly recognised. Yes: she had known him at once by his bearing, his firm, proud step, wrapped as he was in a Roquelaure: there was no mistaking Bernard Elphinstone.

He had not observed her, but had pursued his melancholy walk, scarcely glancing at the carriage. But to know that he was again in that neighbourhood, to feel that he *had* returned, was joy enough to the happy, enamoured Lilia. Her face glowed with happiness as she entered Mr. Patteson's drawing-room, and shook hands with a row of Pattesons; and even their laugh, which of late had grated upon her ears, displeased her not. She received Mr. Tracey almost cordially, for the sunbeam of hope had dispelled all clouds from her mind. Lilia sat next to Mr. Tracey. She found, to her delight,—for he began immediately on the subject,—that he had quite changed his tone about Mr. Elphinstone. He spoke with a generous interest—a fine, lenient, gentlemanly consideration. He professed to know nothing as to the result of the trial,

regarding which Lilia, emboldened by her own happy feelings, ventured to ask him. "I dare say, however," he said, "Mr. Smith, who is chairman of the Sessions at ——, and has been there to-day, can give us the latest news. It is, indeed, so interesting a trial, so singular a position, that any one with the slightest love of the romantic must feel concerned to hear the result. Mr. Smith, can you tell me what is the judgment given in that singular Scottish case, in which some former neighbours of ours, greatly respected by all of us, are the defendants?"

Mr. Smith, a man esteemed for his sagacity, of few words, but those words oracular, looked up from his plate, and said—"Decided, sir! in this day's paper."

"And how?" Tracey could feel Lilia tremble near him.

"Against Mr. Elphinstone, sir, whose pretensions to the estates are about as good as yours and mine—the whole thing a conspiracy, got up by Lady Janet, his mother, and sanctioned by Sir John, his father. Mr. Elphinstone's a ruined man! Must go abroad for life, sir."

A profound silence—a cessation of all those multifarious noises which accompany a dinner, followed this announcement.

"For *life?*" whispered Lilia, unable to restrain her anxiety, to Tracey.

"No douht—I fear so—for he must be dreadfully involved; and his best friends must wish him not to stay here, to be immured for debt the rest of his days." ("How white that cheek is!" thought Tracey, as he spoke.)

Mr. Smith knew better than everybody else; yet the subject was discussed, and with some warmth. There was an Elphinstone party, and a Moncrieff party. Some thought one way, some another. In the thick of the argument Mr. Aylmer arose, and was seen gently supporting a young lady out of the room. She had become paler and paler; at last an hysteric sob broke from her. Tracey rose also, but retreated, as he saw Aylmer taking care of poor Lilia. They went into a sort of library adjoining the dining-room; and Lilia, in the midst of her anguish, felt the kindness and sympathy of Mr. Aylmer. Before he was followed by a flight of young ladies, he had placed her on a sofa; and, as he reverently offered a pillow for her head, he whispered quickly—"*I* see all you feel; but let me advise you to conceal it. You do not know to how much danger——" He was here interrupted by Miss Patteson bringing in a small family medicine chest, and followed by the housekeeper with a bottle of salts.

Lilia revived; but her dejection was so extreme, her manner expressed such a thorough indifference to everything that was

passing, or that was likely to pass, that she was spared a return to the dining-room. She entreated to be left alone, and she was left alone, until the gaieties of the evening commenced.

So absorbing was her sorrow, so intense her sympathy with the absent, that she was indifferent to what would at any other time have distressed her—the conjectures of the company. She need not, however, have been apprehensive. Those whom she had left were not, with few exceptions, likely to conjure up a romance upon the occasion. Ladies were given to fainting in those days; it was a regular thing at balls, and very common at church; and, as might be expected, the ladies accounted for Lilia's illness physically. It was sitting too near the fire, Mrs. Howard, who would endure martyrdom rather than burn her face, supposed. Good Mrs. Patteson wondered whether fish agreed with her? And among the Miss Pattesons various reasons were started. It might be the cold wind, or the hot room, or the damp yesterday, or the departure of the frost, or the change of the moon. Mr. Tracey and Miss Hope said nothing.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FAREWELL.

Meantime, whilst his fate had excited the commiseration of some, and had edified others, Bernard Elphinstone was encountering, perhaps, his bitterest trial, the first interview with his brother. Sholto had been absent when Bernard returned privately to Hopewood. The house had not, indeed, ever been thrown open; and the servants were desired to be silent respecting Mr. Elphinstone's arrival. He wished but to revisit the place, partly to entrust certain papers to Mr. Hope's care, partly to take a last look of the scenes of some years of happiness, and then to hurry to the coast.

Sholto entered abruptly the library where his brother was sitting—neither of them looked at each other. Bernard, indeed, turned from his desk towards the fire, and seemed prepared to listen to Sholto; but he spoke not.

Sholto's impatience at last broke forth. Again must I confess that if ever there were anything to countenance the tale that these brothers were the offspring of different parents, the great dissimilitude of their characters would seem to authorise it. Sholto was bitter, sarcastic, suspicious. His disappoint-

ment took that form of vindictive feeling which Bernard had nobly overcome. Nor had the character of the younger brother the power of endurance and of manly resignation which elevated that of Bernard. He wept with passion—in anguish; and the difference might plainly be seen between a hard disposition and a firm one. Sholto had little sensibility for others, but feelings easily excited for himself.

"And do you," he exclaimed, "intend calmly to sit down under these injuries? to resign yourself to be insulted, cheated, betrayed? You want spirit! you are indifferent to your own honour, Bernard, and to my mother's memory!"

Bernard raised his head and fixed his eyes upon his brother with a look of sorrow, reproach, and pity, that angels might have wept to see, yet he spoke not for some moments.

"I *have* suffered," he said, at last; "for I have as great a stake to lose, as much of happiness to forego, as you, Sholto." His voice trembled with emotion. "I have *burned*," he added, emphatically, and rising from his seat, "even for revenge on the perjured. May God forgive me! But what can we do? I have no funds; for you must be aware, that though the expenses of the trial come, nominally, out of the estate, such expenses do not cover half its real cost. I have no means, Sholto, as you know, nor friends to aid me with means, to appeal, as I believe I might do, to the House of Peers. Considering well these things, having a firm reliance on the honour of our parents, I wait humbly, I hope, yet confidently, to the workings of time. I think I may trust," he added, looking up, whilst his fine, youthful form wore the dignity of intellect, coupled with strong emotion, "to Heaven for our future redress."

Sholto was silent, but unconvinced. Bernard then resumed,—

"Let us speak upon this subject no more: why should we? For it would but irritate us to madness! It cannot nerve us for action. Dear Sholto, alone now, as we are, together in the world, let not these few days be saddened by a subject which, I confess to you, once nearly drove me to thoughts of which, I hope," he added, in a low and hurried tone, "I have duly repented. The little wreck of what we might really call ours—for you know it was ours by legacy—is lodged for you in our solicitor's hand. Let me entreat of you to apply, without delay, to the study of an honourable profession. My plans are already unfolded to you: and now, let us dismiss for ever," he added, with a deep sigh, "the hopes of our youth!" He wrung his brother's hand. Sholto was bowed down almost to the dust. How lacerated was the

noble heart that bled for him! How stern was the attempt, and it succeeded, to bear the misery of that moment as a man ought!

The subject was closed that night, and a separation was agreed upon, which took place in a few days afterwards.

In the interval, Bernard Elphinstone indulged himself once more in rambling in the neighbourhood of Haskreton. He had a strong desire to see, once more, one whose influence over his affections had been the dearer from the contrast which her gentle image formed with thoughts that disgusted, and objects revolting and fearful. No selfish wishes found a harbour in his breast; he wished, if possible, to see, unseen, and to bid a mute and unappreciated farewell. But fate decreed it otherwise, and determined that these two fond hearts should understand each other.

The walk from Hopewood to Haskreton was a long one, except for the young and ardent. It was a fine clear winter's day when Bernard undertook it, and the exercise brought consolation to his harassed mind. His spirits, indeed, were lightened; for, be it remembered, he had for months been racked by dread disclosures, and there was relief, of a peculiar kind, in certainty—a relief, it must be acknowledged, that is very like the condition in which the case of a mortification has succeeded acute pain. But there lurked, perhaps, a latent conviction that his sufferings were but transient, and that Time, the great equaliser, would restore him to his rights.

The straggling village of Haskreton skirted the paling of what had once been a park in the manor-house; and somewhere in this paling a gate was opened, leading through a dense wood to a meadow, whence, for it sloped downwards, the manor-house could be seen. Into this path Bernard turned: he paced it quickly, his firm step startling the squirrels as they escaped to the summits of the leafless trees, and he soon leaned over the paling on the opposite side of the plantation, and gazed upon the quiet scene before him.

Feelings of love for that country, of attachment to home, almost broke out into expressions of anguish, when a footstep behind him made him turn round.

It was Lilia,—her winter's cloak wrapped around her, walking slowly and downcast; as she raised her head, and Bernard and she recognized each other, her eyes were full of tears.

A brief, yet, to both, momentous interview ensued. It was not that love was expressed,—it was not that one bursting emotion of their hearts was revealed by words; but the history of the past, the presage of the future was told in a language which man may sometimes, when it suits his purpose, profess

not to understand, but which woman lays up in her memory for ever. It was too late for reserve, and yet too soon for confidence. But we are the creatures of impulse, and when we yield to those which are imprudent, and not vicious, God pardons what man condemns.

Her hand was placed in his, and Lilia looked at him with a love that was never effaced from one heart. That look had much of sadness in it ; it was answered by Bernard Elphinstone with words of consolation and of hope. Yet his heart misgave him ; he accused himself of all that was dishonourable, even as he spoke.

"Let me hope," he said, and he pressed the yielding hand between his, "that I may be forgiven ; that I may forgive myself for coming here with, indeed, no idea but that of once more seeing *your* home. It were idle now," he added, after a pause, "to conceal that my deepest regret is leaving *you*. The time may come—it will come—when I shall prove it ! Do not forget me !"

Lilia could not speak, but she pressed the hand which held hers, and her tears fell fast. Then Bernard recollected himself.

"Perhaps I am wrong—I know that I am wrong," he said, hurriedly, "to say all this ; but it is done. It is *too* much happiness," he added, with great emotion, "to think that you are grieved at my departure. I have been betrayed into what I ought not to have avowed. Farewell !"

He broke from her ; and Lilia, drooping like a withered flower, moved onwards towards her home. None saw that meeting, nor knew how mingled was the agony of that moment with the exquisite happiness of being loved.

Such were his sentiments : and he went into a world of perils, armed with that panoply which a virtuous attachment, an honourable hope, confers. Firm in his nature, his love to Lilia never altered, until——but I must proceed in the due order of my narrative.

Even as she reached home, Lilia read her destiny in Honora's reproaches. Poor Honora had been impressed by her father, by Mrs. Howard, and even by Uncle Humphrey, with the advantages of Mr. Matthew Purdillion's position in life. She had been told of his projected addresses, and had heard him called up as a paragon of gentlemanly manners and of domestic virtue. Her imagination supplied the rest. Seated in her chair, near the fire (for her bower now was too cold for her), she painted his figure six feet, his face finely characterized by a true nobility of mind. Even his dress, she could fancy, was in accordance with that attribute ; he was, in her fancy, a model of elegance ; and the little he did say (for she had remarked

that he spoke less than many others of her acquaintance) proved his modesty and discretion. Honora's opinion, formed under great disadvantages, was thus fallacious. She had formed it, as too many of us do, without the due power of judging.

Her acute ear was listening for the return of Lilia. "How heavily she treads!" she said to herself, as she heard her go up stairs; "how unlike my sweet sister! She is not happy here," thought Honora. "This is not the home for her! She should have affluence—ease—consideration!" She moved out of the room in which she sat, and, groping her way, compassed the ascent to Lilia's bed-room, where, as she rightly guessed, her sister had taken refuge.

The door was bolted. "Lilia, dear!" cried Honora, "may I come in? Lilia! what is the matter with you? Why do you not answer? At all events, Lilia, lead me down these stairs again. I may come up, but I dare not go down alone, as you know."

The door was slowly opened.

"Lilia," said Honora, "I want to speak to you. You are not happy: I hear you sigh as you pass my door. Your mirth and playfulness are quite gone. This is no home for you, Lilia; I have seen it long. You should have refinement and freedom, not the cramped society of Mrs. Howard. Why will you throw your happiness away?"

Lilia looked at her with surprise; and though the poor blind Honora saw it not, her face, pale before, was flushed with the dread of discovery.

"I do not, indeed, Honora," she said trembling. "Why do you say so?"

"They tell me," returned her sister, "that you shun the addresses of Mr. Purdillion, who, as I hear, wishes to pay his addresses to you. Lilia, why do you start?"

"I—I did not perceive his intentions."

"Well, then, now you must know them. Lilia, it is the hope of my life—my daily prayer—my only wish (for what have I, poor blind creature! to wish on earth)—that you may marry well and happily. It is not a selfish wish; for should I ever recover your loss? What is there to me so precious as you, my dear, dear Lilia? And who will there be, when you are gone, except poor William, to pass the livelong days for me? Oh, no! it is not a selfish wish."

Honora felt the hand that was placed in hers tremble, as Lilia said, "The time may come, dear Honora, when your wishes for me will be realised: but never, never talk to me of *that* man. I detest his proposals; and pray, pray tell my father so, and let them be rejected at once."

Honora was struck by her vehemence. She reflected for some moments. She was disappointed, but the decision of Lilia's reply was unanswerable.

"Beware, Lilia, how you irritate my father; you know how absolute his temper is. I dare not, for your sake, repeat to him what you say."

"Then, Honora, I will leave home—I will run away—I will bury myself anywhere, rather than marry that man!" cried Lilia, passionately.

Honora did not answer her for some moments. "There must be some one whom you like, Lilia—some one for whose sake you are altered to all of us. Perhaps it is Mr. Tracey?"

Lilia was silent. Her sister's curiosity she knew to be insatiable; and she dared not to deny this charge, lest another object should be pressed.

"I have long thought it but too probable," said Honora, musing. "There *was* a time, Lilia, when you confided everything to me; but now my father's marriage has brought such disunion in the family, that we are all affected by it more or less." Honora, like all persons possessed with a strong antipathy, reduced all evils to that one source. She waited, for some moments, to hear more; but her sister did not speak again upon the subject; and, after a few idle conjectures, Honora was led again to her own apartments. But this avowal on the part of Lilia hurried on a result but little desired or anticipated by her family.

—Such were the movements, regrets, interests of the manor-house—the changes and chances which make up the sum of human happiness or misery. Meantime, how fared the inhabitants of the Hall?

While peace reigned in the antique woods which enveloped that massive tenement—whilst the sunshine played upon its walls, and a host of servants, in laced liveries and powdered wigs, waited on its owners—some chances there were which were not less dire to its inhabitants than those which agitated the dwellers in an humbler region.

One bright morning, two anomalous looking men were seen lurking about the park: when spoken to, they confessed they had no business there, and retired; yet, the next day, they were again observed. They were not gentlemen; neither were they servants; they were civil enough when admonished to retire, but pertinacious in returning. Isabel, the lonely cousin, whom no one heeded, was the first to take alarm at their presence; yet she knew not why; for, as yet, the indescribable sensations which accompany a first acquaintance with a sheriff's officer were unknown to her.

She had a thousand fears that these were men come to injure—perhaps assassinate—her cousin; and an instinct that all was not right—not sufficiently distinct to act upon it—possessed her mind.

One day, however, she flew, like a scared bird, into the library, where Lord Ravenspur was sitting, and, pale and speechless, sank down before him. Lord Ravenspur, who was looking over some papers with his assistant, Mr. Austin, the compiler, did not heed her; for she was his shadow, his gentle nurse and messenger, and mediator between the higher and the lower powers in that large establishment. She drew his attention, however, by pushing his arm with a convulsive force. He turned a look of surprise upon her.

"Isabel! What now?"

"My lord—Mr. Tracey——"

"Mr. Tracey has not dared to offer any insult to *you?*" exclaimed Lord Ravenspur, whilst the colour tinged his fair brow. "Mr. Austin, withdraw, if you please. Yet I am surprised at nothing that he does—profligate, ill-conditioned boy! He will break my heart. Well, Isabel, now for your complaint."

"I make no complaint," replied Isabel, whilst her lips quivered with an agony which was not then, nor ever, explained to the unhappy father. "Listen, my dear lord!" she proceeded, gasping. "As my cousin rode home to-day, two men, who have long been watching him, handed him a paper. It was a writ, so Mr. Aylmer said; and they hurried him to prison!" As she spoke, she clasped her hands in anguish.

Lord Ravenspur sighed, but was calm; and, "Not for the first, nor the second time," he said, mournfully, "must my poor estate pay—fresh involvements! For myself, it is of little moment; my days, Isabel, cannot be long; but he is bringing upon himself an honest man's misery, and every man's curse—debt!"

The poor orphan girl, thus addressed, sank down, and, kissing her uncle's hand, wept at the thought that vexation and anxieties were bringing him to a grave of sorrow; and well she might, for, when that grave closed on him, Isabel lost her only friend.

"Do not be unhappy, my dear child!" said Lord Ravenspur, raising her (for her head had fallen on his knee), "there is one remedy for his errors which I prescribed long since—why did he not follow it?—to marry!" He leaned his head upon his hand. "Send Mr. Aylmer to me," he resumed, addressing the mute, and, as it were, paralysed girl, who stood, upon hearing those words, as if, like the rain-drop on the bough, suddenly congealed by the breath of the winter's blast.

Lord Ravenspur looked at her with emotions not new to him; for, in spite of his literary pursuits, and of his well-known absence of mind, which induced many ludicrous adventures, his discernment was, in Isabel's case, quickened by the feelings of the heart.

The thoughts that then arose confirmed his resolution. "He must, he shall marry!" So absorbed was he in this reflection, that he noticed not, for some moments, Mr. Aylmer, who was standing near him.

"Oh! Aylmer, are you here? I did not notice you; for indeed, Harry, my heart is very heavy. What is this affair about—about my son? I still call him so, but, indeed, I blush to do so. I hope his example may be a warning to you, Aylmer. But what *are* his debts? Shall I ever get to the end of them? How is he to be released?" A succinct, but, alas! not very accurate, statement of the incarcerated Mr. Tracey's affairs formed the answer to this outbreak. Lord Ravenspur heard all, and then said,

"Very well, these must be paid,—and then,—Aylmer, he must marry."

The young man started, coloured a little, and inquired whether his lordship's advice were similar to his former suggestions touching Miss Purdillion?

"Assuredly, she may not be young, but her character is excellent; and *he* must not stand upon those things. He must not look for youth and beauty; it is only the free, and the respectable, the virtuous, Aylmer, who can expect to marry from affection."

Aylmer looked down; those words cut into a heart even then awakening to many good impressions, yet sure to relapse, because diseased at the very core. He turned away, being charged with instructions to Lord Ravenspur's solicitor, when his lordship recalled him.

"Stay, Aylmer, come near me; your father and I were college friends, Aylmer; and I thought I did the best for his son, being my own relation, when I bred him up with *my* son. I had perhaps done better had I educated you for the church, made you a poor curate, or a schoolmaster even, rather than as I have done. There is still time to atone for it—will you go into the church?"

"My lord," replied Aylmer, with a degree of spirit unusual to him, "you may command anything but that."

"Yet you are now wholly dependent upon *him*," said Lord Ravenspur, "and his extravagance leaves me no power of doing what I wished, either for you, or for poor Isabel." He spoke in deep dejection, and even with some degree of nervous

twitching and tremor. "So you will not go into the church?" he added. Aylmer, scarcely responding to this second query, had left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In a few days Mr. Tracey returned, unabashed, unrepentant; having added, meantime, some fresh sources of vice and attractions to that which obtains, on false pretences, the name of pleasure, during his short sojourn in the King's Bench Prison.

His first interview with his father was a painful one to one of the parties; and it was evident to every one, that Lord Ravenspur was fast breaking, and that that consideration, perhaps, gave impulse to his now intense desire for his son's marriage.

I pass over the preliminaries of that revolting union. The proposal was made in due form—in due form rejected at first, then coyly accepted. It was a sale, a bargain on both sides, as much as any negotiation could be; the one purchased safety, ease, broad lands, gold pieces—the other rank. The views of the future Lady Ravenspur were quite as worldly, if not so mercenary, as those of her lord.

After the due settlements had been made, and the sharpness of the lady's wits on the subject of her affairs fully tested, they were married. That event has always so greatly disgusted me, that I cannot bear to think of it, much less to write about it. One little trait I will relate, showing that Mr. Tracey's indifference to his wife was manifested at a *very* early period of their union. So completely did he forget, or pretend to forget, the tie which had just taken place, that, on leaving the church, he was getting into the carriage before his bride; when, recollecting himself, he turned round, exclaiming, "My *dear Miss Purdillion!* I beg ten thousand pardons."

The family at the manor had not recovered their astonishment, even when the bonfires blazed up behind those antique elms, and startled the rooks, whose forefathers had witnessed many changes in the patrician race who dwelt in the hall. There was a majority in the manor-house that approved of Mr. Tracey's choice—Mrs. Howard, of course. She was very much embarrassed to know how she ought to treat the bride, on what terms they would meet, and whether this elevation would erect a barrier between them; and every fresh peal of the

church bells, as she sat knitting on the evening of the wedding in the parlour, revived the subject.

"I wonder—I wonder," she said anxiously, "who it is to call first."

Uncle Humphrey, who had been looking out of the window, though there was nothing to be seen, turned round with a look of contempt.

"Lord bless you, madam! is she not in the same skin as she was?" and then resumed his gaze upon the approach.

"I wonder if the Hopes will visit at the hall now?" said Lilia, gently.

"Oh, dear yes, Miss Lilia! anybody will visit anywhere for a dinner," returned Uncle Humphrey, his hands in his pockets.

"I cannot make it out at all," cried Honora, struck and puzzled by the composure with which Lilia had received this event. "It seems all an enigma to me."

"Is it, my dear?" answered Uncle Humphrey, with a sarcastic smile, which, fortunately, poor Honora saw not. "*I* have foreseen this long. I knew it was Lord Ravenspur's wish, through my friend Baldwin, his lordship's steward. So that *I*," he added, with a malicious look at Lilia, "had none of the expectations that others were silly enough to entertain."

"If you mean to apply that to me," exclaimed Lilia, her cheeks glowing, "you are, my dear uncle, quite mistaken, for——"

"Yes, I knew I should be mistaken," interrupted Uncle Humphrey, with a look full of significance, which cut Lilia's sentence short.

"I only meant to say," she resumed, bravely, after a short pause of confusion, "that had Mr. Tracey been a thousand times richer and greater than he is, I would never have married him."

"I entirely believe you," said Uncle Humphrey, fixing his grey eyes upon her with a very peculiar stare.

This drove Lilia from the room; and Uncle Humphrey's voice rung in her ears, as he cried out loudly, "'Tis conscience makes cowards of us all!"

Scarcely, however, had she left the room when her father entered it. Mr. Howard was in a bad humour: it was one of those days when everything had gone wrong with him, and as to resisting the tempter, or checking his irritability, he had no notion of it. He esteemed it one of his fatherly privileges to be tyrannical—one of his conjugal virtues to make Mrs. Howard know that he was the master. After this, the good man thought he might reasonably expect cheerful faces and a happy home.

He came in with his hands in his pockets, and was greeted with a question from his wife,—"Have you seen or heard anything of the wedding?"

"Confound the wedding! No! What are weddings to me! I am sure two are enough in one's lifetime. And pray, Mrs. Howard, what has become of the grand wedding we were to have in our family? That's going on, I hope: or have you frightened the young gentleman away by the shabby dinners you gave him last week?"

"A strange sort of a lover!" cried Uncle Humphrey, laughing; "who may that be?"

"The bride's cousin, my acquaintance," replied Mrs. Howard, "and a very genteel man. I never saw a man's linen kept in such order as his, nor so precise and neat a gentleman. If Lilia would but think so!"

"Think so, madam?" shouted Mr. Howard, "she has no right but to think so. She's not of age, and she can't think otherwise. Who talks of her thinking at all? My father had six daughters, and I never heard of their being allowed to think for themselves, indeed!"

"It's a very bad habit," said Mrs. Howard, shaking her head with solemn gravity. "Why, in this very marriage, that we're all rejoicing at, that an ox—upon my word and honour, I think I never saw such another—is roasting for, and all the people here having plum-pudding, and all—and all that."

"It is not his choice? No! 'tis his father's choice; and a very happy marriage it is! and so are all such marriages!" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "I declare," he added, vehemently, "if I were to go through life again, I wouldn't have any choice."

"My dear!" said Mrs. Howard, reproachfully.

"Why, what's our experience worth," shouted Mr. Howard, so loud as to disturb two dogs sleeping by the fire, "but to guide others? Pray, where is Miss Lilia?"

Uncle Humphrey tapped him on the back.

"Don't, don't be warm; I can tell you how it is. She's a foolish girl, and she's given away her heart to that Bernard Elphinstone, or whatever his name is, that has made such a noise in the papers; and ——"

"The man that's lost his estate!" interrupted Mr. Howard, in a voice of frenzy. "Him! I bet you half a guinea that it is ——The man that hasn't a shilling! that is'nt even a gentleman by birth! that's gone off to France, or to Jericho, no matter which! Oh, that I should have lived to see this day! Honora blind, and Lilia ungrateful!"

He clasped his hands, violently red, and looked like the

most injured of men. At this moment, Honora, who had been sitting at a remote end of the room, her face upraised, but her countenance showing that she had heard the discussion, came gently forward, and stood behind her father. She, indeed, passionately loved him, but she saw his faults; and her love for Lilia was perhaps the stronger attachment of the two.

"Yes, my dear father!" she said mournfully, "I am blind—poor Honora is blind! you did not know that I was near you, or you would not have said it to pain me; but I can *see* what is for the best in this, our divided, and unhappy family!"

"Unhappy family!" cried Mr. Howard, "who says we are an unhappy family? I say we are a very happy family! a remarkably united, happy family!"

"And I say *not*," replied Honora, firmly; "but that is not the point. I tell you, sir, that Lilia will *not* marry Mr. Purdillion; that—whether what my Uncle Humphrey chooses to assert be true or not, I cannot say—she dislikes him, and will not have him."

"Most ungrateful! And what right has she to dislike any body, madam, or miss?" cried Mr. Howard, incensed beyond control.

—While Mrs. Howard observed, "So large a family as ours, too, and so much overpressed for room in the house."

"She does not like him; and though," said Honora, "I have had little to do with such things—little," and her voice trembled slightly, "opportunity of understanding such matters, I can quite comprehend how disgusting must be the addresses of one whom one despises and dislikes. Poor Lilia!"

There was a deep silence after this speech, and the passions of Mr. Howard were pacified by the courage and decision of Honora.

Meantime, the happy pair hastened to Bath, and their history was, to their neighbours, a blank for the time.

But a change was soon to take place which produced a marked influence on the neighbourhood, which so greatly depended upon the presiding spirits at the hall for example and society—Lord Ravenspur died.

His health had been visibly declining for some time; and all the energies of the mournful Isabel had been aroused to nurse and to cheer him, but in vain; and so fragile was her now emaciated figure, and so pallid her face, that there were some who thought that *she* would first be summoned from a world of trial.

But they were mistaken; *why* the orphan was reserved to greater sorrows, to renewed temptation, to a different fate,

God, in His inscrutable decrees knows ; to us, poor observers, it had seemed well that Isabel had been entombed, when he, who alone loved and protected her, was laid in all the splendour of the mausoleum, beneath the tattered banners of past ages.

She saw that the heart of Lord Ravenspur was breaking—that his pride, his hopes, his faith, had all been wounded, crushed. She read it all with anguish, yet still she madly loved the sinner who had dealt those countless pangs to his father's tenderest feelings.

For days before his death, Lord Ravenspur scarcely mentioned his son ; all his care in this world seemed to be directed to her whose secret he had probed, yet forbore, with innate delicacy, to reveal to her. His fancy pictured to him all that might befall her when he was gone. Alas ! it did not picture too gloomy a future for the ill-starred, and infatuated Isabel.

Frequent sighs and groans even broke from him ; nor could the soft remonstrances of his chaplain check that heartfelt sorrow which left him not until his last sleep. Smooth, indeed, were the admonitions, spiritual medicine tempered with honey, and a phraseology carefully guarded from any innovation on the commonplace. Yet the man was kind, and Lord Ravenspur derived a species of consolation from his visits, of which the worthy Mr. Pratt little dreamed.

One morning, when they were alone (the feebleness of Lord Ravenspur then confined him to his bed), he suddenly exclaimed, turning to the chaplain,—

"Pratt, you are, I am sure, a good man. I am sorry that I have done so little for you in my lifetime."

Mr. Pratt looked down—he rarely looked up. "It is more particularly unfortunate for me," he observed, with the accents of an angel and the look of a saint, "since—since—I fear the office of chaplain is likely enough to become void, when, in the lapse of years, and the course of time, your lordship (for we are mortal) is succeeded by your honourable son."

Lord Ravenspur was silent for some moments,—"Ah !" he said, "do not talk of the course of years ; I have not *days* to live. And, I believe, every earthly care is at an end, except one. You know my niece, Miss Tracey ?" He paused for a reply.

"A remarkably amiable young lady, whom I could not fail to observe," answered the meek chaplain.

—"Though I have not been able to give you a living," resumed Lord Ravenspur, raising himself up in his bed, "I have, indirectly provided for *you ;* that is, if you will do me the

favour—if you will—if Isabel will—in short, if you will marry her, and take her away for ever from this place." Lord Ravenspur sank back exhausted by his effort; but he was eager to complete the bargain. "She has some six thousand pounds of her own, that is, at my death; persuade her to—to like you—that is, if she can."

The poor chaplain was not without his share of vanity. Alas! it is what poor curates live upon, and are consoled by—the esteem and adoration of the fair sex. But he took the part of a modest man, and said humbly, "It is too great an honour, my lord."

"I know the difference of rank; yet, Mr. Pratt,—I am exhausted! withdraw, if you please, and beg that Isabel may be sent to me."

Isabel came—her eyes moist with tears, her whole manner bespeaking despair; but she soothed and assisted the invalid, arranged—none else could do it—his pillows, and administered the cordial.

Lord Ravenspur looked at her with a melancholy smile. "It is of no use, Isabel, I cannot resist much longer the power of death. I must give it up," he added, trying to be composed; but his frame shook, and the *fear of death*, that universal and overmastering instinct came upon him in all its awful terrors. He became very pale; and Isabel, alarmed, had her hand on the bell.

"Do not ring. Oh, Isabel! let us be as much alone together as possible; I cannot bear those common minds near me. Yours—but, my dear child, I have much to do, little time to perform it in. You will find I have provided for you, out of this estate, the interest of six thousand pounds, and I leave it you in your own disposal, hoping, Isabel," he added, in a low voice, "that you may make some honest man happy with it."

Isabel started at these words, but recovered, in a few moments, her self-possession.

"Will you marry Mr. Pratt? He is willing to do so. I should then die at peace, for you would be *safe*—safe from dishonour!" he repeated to himself, in a low tone. "Let me, Isabel, have the comfort of *seeing* you married to him before I die; let some clergymen be found to bind you for ever to each other. Oh, God! what fears I have for you, Isabel."

Isabel covered her face with her hands, and wept. But she was resolute in her refusal even to think of Mr. Pratt; and presently, the will that could not be overcome by arguments was silenced by weakness, and Lord Ravenspur fell asleep.

Isabel stood watching him, her form never moving, her calmness never failing her, till night drew on. He woke not: then she rang for his accustomed attendants; they came, but disturbed him not. The physician arrived, and pronounced that the apparent sleep was—coma—a fearful word, which bids hope expire, and is a prelude to a last separation. All night his heavy slumber lasted; towards morning the breathing ceased. His spirit had passed away.

CHAPTER XIX.

FUNERAL RITES.

"And I awoke, and behold I was a lord!" Such were the terms in which the young Lord Ravenspur, in a letter to a friend, alluded to what most men feel, at the first, as a bereavement. What were his inmost emotions, and whether remorse for the past formed any part of them, it is difficult to conjecture. One thing he certainly felt, and showed—that he had married too soon.

Lady Ravenspur had just begun to discover her own mistake, when the news arrived which completely changed her path in life. She had never experienced impoliteness, she had met with no contradiction from her husband; but from the earliest days of their marriage they had been separated. Her dignity, not her affection, was hurt, and all the obstinacy and fire in her nature were gradually aroused. Lord Ravenspur had sown the wind, and was soon to reap the whirlwind: but the accession of honour delayed that tempestuous harvest for a season.

He came in, dressed in his new suit of mourning, into her dressing-room, the day after the news had arrived.

"Good morning, Lady Ravenspur; I am just setting off to Haskreton, and await your commands. What are your plans? Do not you think that Bath will agree better with your health this winter than Haskreton?"

Lady Ravenspur drew up. "No, my lord, I intend to take my proper seat, and my proper station, at the head of my own house, and I shall follow your lordship to-morrow. I always consider my line of duty."

"Oh, most undoubtedly—leaving out that inconvenient virtue, obedience. Your consideration for me and mine is quite touching. My lady, good morning."

"Good morning, my lord. May this affliction be sanctified to you!"

Lord Ravenspur bowed ; a slight smile played over his countenance as he looked down. "Talking of afflictions," he said, turning back for a moment, "I shall leave you a score of them in the shape of bills. I am so hurried that I shall not have time to settle them, and must, most unwillingly, transfer that task to you." He waited for no reply, but departed.

The lying in state of the old lord furnished the county for conversation for some weeks. The funeral was still more productive of discourse. Such was the delay in travelling, that every preparation was made for those last obsequies before Lord Ravenspur reached home.

He did once, and only once, in compliance with the repeated suggestions of the old steward, enter the room wherein the shrivelled remains of his father lay, beneath a canopy surmounted by a doleful plume of feathers, and by that commentary upon human vanity, a hatchment ; and Lord Ravenspur started back, for, standing at the head of the bed stood a white figure—the hands falling powerless by the side, the eyes tearless, the brow already wrinkled with unutterable despair and woe. Thus appeared the stricken Isabel ; and day after day had she been planted there, appearing like those monumental figures above the sepulchres of the dead.

Years afterwards, that shadowy form flitted again to the fevered gaze of Lord Ravenspur, and that very chamber was haunted by her pale remembrance.

On the first occasion, he withdrew so abruptly that those who had won him to visit that chamber by their persuasions were startled by a haste and agitation which they attributed to filial sorrow.

One afternoon, as Honora, leaning on the arm of Lilia, walked upon the terrace of the manor-house, they both, with one accord, stopped short, for the solemn tolling of the minute-bell struck up that moment from the village church.

They walked on in sisterly converse, for Lilia was to travel in a few days to ——, and they unburdened all that those who are seldom separated, and who fondly love each other, have to communicate.

The minute-bell was still tolling when they went into the house, and during that night it was heard reverberating through the dark woods of Haskreton. At midnight it ceased ; and that drear silence was the notice that all was over, that the body of the departed was laid in the sepulchre, whilst his soul had gone to its eternal rest. An hour afterwards, Mr. Howard came home. He was grave and pale, for even his

strong nerves were shaken by the midnight ceremonial, the hearse, the nodding plumes, the words that speak of judgment and the world to come. The stout hearts of a hale and numerous tenantry were melted within them, as they walked, after the slow procession, through woods in which his ghost might then be flitting. Nay, many averred that, as the torches were raised, and the sylvan scene partially disclosed, a figure draped in black was seen scudding through the glades, onward to the church.

All had left it, save a few stray mourners, when, to the amazement of those who lingered, this shadowy form emerged from the postern-door in the chancel, and bent over the mouth of the vault. It seemed bowed down by grief, and yet to have energy enough to enter the vault, when, one of attendants interposing, the slight form gave way at a touch, and, sinking back, fell, sensible to grief no longer, into the arms of him who had grasped it. The black hood fell from the pale face, and Isabel Tracey was recognized. She was carried, fainting, from the church. Already had rumours attached themselves to her name. The good pitied, all shunned her, and she was left to the desolation of sorrow, without advice or sympathy.

Lilia heard this narrative, which flew on the wings of the wind to the manor, with a shudder. She comprehended, in part, the misery and peril of being dependent on Lord Ravenspur, and an instinctive dread of his vicinity, a conviction that his presence was dangerous to all under his influence, affected her in a manner for which she could hardly account. She remembered his looks of devotion—his words of flattery to herself—and involuntarily exclaimed, "Save me from him!" Then she recollected that he was married, yet the knowledge of that circumstance imparted no security, but added only disgust to disgust.

CHAPTER XX.

A MILITARY LIFE.

Years pass away, and we are all sensible of the changes in external circumstances produced by time: some are now great whom we could remember insignificant; others impoverished, at whose tables we fared sumptuously. But the unseen

changes are yet more surprising; the miracles worked by the passions—the revolutions of the mind—the important alterations in character, are far more curious than those vicissitudes in the affairs of life by which we are so greatly astonished.

Misfortune, which softens and sweetens some dispositions, embittered that of Sholto Elphinstone, whilst the loftier nature of his brother was somewhat hardened by the events of his youth. The younger brother, endowed with talents, astute, and energetic, possessed of knowledge, became an able but sarcastic man. He had begun life with little trust in human goodness, and that slender stock lessened to nothing.

His brother, who had given to his species a large share of confidence and love, had been betrayed, as he conceived, and become the victim of perjury and fraud. Proud, honourable, and sensitive, he withdrew within himself, and a fatal nicety upon all points connected with his own reputation was the result of the early shock to his hopes and interests.

It was his lot to see Lilia once more, before that separation of years which both had anticipated.

Mrs. Topham,—my Sister Grace,—to whose care Lilia Howard was consigned, had married one of those officers who seem to be in a perpetual state of half-pay. No one had ever known Captain Topham to be anything but discontented, anything but unsettled. He was one of those men who are continually hunting out for appointments, and never getting them; always ill-used by the Commander-in-Chief, and irritated against the Horse Guards. I suppose it is as necessary to the world that there should be some of these sort of men, to act as acids in the alkali of society, as that there should be thunderstorms and volcanoes in the natural world. Captain Topham was sour, but he was weak, not a man that slept at nights, meagre and dyspeptic, which was all the fault of the Horse Guards.

Mrs. Topham was a fine dashing soldier's wife, whose great aim in life was to find a cheap place to live in, with plenty of balls for her daughters; she, like her brother, Mr. Howard, possessed an exaggerated style of beauty—large and strapping, untidy and merry; she had tried every imaginable place of residence, from Guernsey to Jersey, and Jersey to the Cove of Cork, from Cork to Bath; and now, as the Fates would have it, was plunged down in an obscure trading town in the centre of England. Of course she was always grumbling, and comparing the place with former places; but, as Captain Topham was fixed in that vicinity by some small local appointment, infinitely below his merits, there was she condemned to stay.

Her house was situated in a pleasant part of the town of

——, and might generally be known by all the windows being open, and by there being a young lady at each window; and their ribands flying out perpetually attracted the recruiting officers who were stationed at ——.

Mrs. Topham received her niece herself at the door (which was never closed) of what she emphatically termed her nutshell. "You are very welcome, my dear," she exclaimed, as she kissed her heartily. "How like her poor mother! I have had a shake-down put for Sophy in the top attic, so you'll have her room. Now, don't make any excuses, you are heartily welcome."

They entered a meagre "ready furnished," which often means no furnished, sitting-room, denominated by Mrs. Topham "a hole." "At Guernsey, I had a palace, my dear, for half the money. I had a looking-glass as it was there; and there, as you might suppose," indicating the imaginary locality with her finger; "a handsome commode which held everything—tea, sugar, candles; in short, I've sometimes put my dresses in it, when we were short of room up stairs; and then ——"

"And then," said Sophy, her daughter, who had left her heart at Guernsey, "we had a press-bed sofa, which you would not have known to be anything but an elegant couch, and was *so* useful when our friends happened to be late at night!"

"And *such* society!" added Mrs. Topham. "But now let us hear some of *your* news—how's my brother? William likely to settle in life just yet? And poor Honora—no chance of an operation there, I suppose? Captain Coutts, of the 9th Foot was wonderfully restored after fourteen years' blindness, by ——. But we must get you some tea before talking of these family matters, I think."

Tea was brought in in the usual scrambling way of the house, for Mrs. Topham's servants were always at the fair, or going to the play, and there was a perpetual char-woman system; but the meal was easy and merry, and all matters, even of life and death, seemed to be taken so lightly, under the influence of Mrs. Topham's gay spirits, and her daughters' restless and vivacious tempers, that Lilia could not but try to rally. Anything serious seemed out of place in that desultory mode of existence.

In the morning after breakfast, the Miss Tophams, Sophy and Harriet, pointed out to the uninitiated eyes of Lilia the flag in the market-place where recruits were made; and the place where the band played; and the lodgings of an officer who practised on the flute all day; and the great Hare and Hounds Inn, just across the open place near their house, called the Marsh, where the officers of a marching regiment of dra-

goons were quartered. Meantime, by a singular chance, Bernard Elphinstone had stopped the very night before at that very inn, on his way to Ireland, with these very officers. He joined them not at the mess, but walked alone, his heart closed up against the intrusion of any new interest, through the populous but lowly town of ——. His fine person, his elegance of manner, and his strange history ,had attracted already the regards of his brother officers, a class of men who are, to do them justice, less interested and worldly in their friendships than the members of other professions; but he rejected all advances, and fed his sad heart upon the past.

There are moments when the sight of sorrow is somewhat gratifying, and reconciles us to our own lot. After a solitary ramble through a town without a single feature of interest in it, Bernard returned towards the inn. A travelling-carriage and four, with a coronet on the panel, was standing at the door; there was a little bustle, a little difficulty about something, and just as Elphinstone touched the first step, he heard it rumoured that the gentleman was "so weak, he must be carried out." Bernard stood still, for at this moment an emaciated young man was lifted out of the coach and borne past him. He was wrapt up to the throat, but the light of the lamp at the inn door fell upon his face, which was delicately formed, but pale to a degree, and the features were sharpened by the progress of consumption. The youth seemed very much exhausted; as he passed Bernard, he opened a clear blue eye for an instant; then the dark lashes fell again upon the hollow cheek, and he was carried away.

The arms upon the carriage were emblazoned in colours familiar to Elphinstone; and as he looked at them, in the hope of discovering the name of the poor young man, he saw certain quarterings well known to the heir of an ancient line. He could hardly bring himself to ask who was the invalid? He was told it was the young Lord Moncrieff; and he hurried into his own room to conceal his agitation.

Here, then, was his youthful adversary—the man who had won from *him all* that life had of value—estates—which involved honour and condition. And the antagonist who had gained from him these possessions wanted them not; he had more than he could ever need, and was, besides, hurrying to the grave, while *he*—blighted in existence, an outcast—was in the full vigour of that existence which might endure—though he sighed as the thought arose—until a good old age.

The occurrence renewed the agonies which the young soldier fondly hoped were quenched by his own firmness; and he paced to and fro in his room in a paroxysm of passionate

grief; and she, who would have gently consoled that anguish, was not far away, and yet was not permitted to impart that solace which affection can, in hopeless misery, alone bestow.

On the following morning, the ill-fated young man re-commenced his journey, for his attendants—he was an orphan—were anxious to hasten him to one of those tombs of the south in which the loveliest of our ripening flowers are seen to decline and wither.

As the equipage, mournful in the silence of those who attended it, drove slowly from the door, Elphinstone looked on with mingled emotions. At one moment he madly wished that he could exchange places with that fragile boy, and die without a stigma; at another, he owned his ingratitude to Providence who had given him vigour, and promised him a future of exertions.

They met no more: for soon the newspapers proclaimed that the young Lord Moncrieff, the heir to redundant honours, and estates of which he knew not entirely the locality, so numerous and extensive were they, was gathered prematurely to the home of his fathers. Meantime, the detachment which Bernard had joined were waiting further orders at ——. After some days of grumbling and idleness, these fine dragoon officers entered into the humours of the town and bespoke a play.

One morning, at breakfast, a bill of great pretensions was laid before the wiry visage of Captain Topham as he ate his thin, dry toast, and drank his tea without milk or sugar—all the fault of the "Horse Guards," who had ruined his constitution. The items were tempting. There was a family company at ——, which, from its manufacturing propensities, was favourable to the theatre. Mr. Monk, the manager, took the venerable portion of mankind in hand, and was father to everybody; and was much respected both on and off the stage. He had an Amazon wife, two sons who did everything, and a daughter who sang "Tarry awhile with me, my love," between the acts, and who was a belle out of doors, with the exception of having holes in her stockings. There were young scions of the same gifted house—boys who danced hornpipes, and little girls who recited "The Passions," before, poor little things! they had much to do with them. It was a very effective company.

Mrs. Topham, dressed in gaudy yellow ribands, and an old, full-dress gown, with long muslin sleeves to give it respectability, took up the bill.

"At Guernsey, *I* was asked to bespeak a play; and I should think Captain Topham's lady ought to have had that compliment paid her. The boxes, I observe, are three shillings; at

Guernsey, they were but two; and the best of performances: we had a King Richard the Third from Covent Garden, and a Mrs. Haller from Bath. Colonel Le Crambo, the head family of the place, led me into my box, I remember, and Mrs. Lee Pelley sat behind me. However, you'll take a box for us, Captain Topham?"

Poor Captain Topham knew he must; but he muttered something about "times being hard, and the way he had been treated at the Horse Guards," and then ate his dry toast in silent anguish. He was a man that it almost brought you into a low fever even to look at.

"There!" said Sophy, pettishly; "if we were at Guernsey, we should go."

"I suppose you must go as it is," murmured Captain Topham, with a deep sigh. "I must dress now to meet the district-general." He stood for a moment and looked out of the window. "If I had my rights now, and everything was not a job, I should be riding, instead of walking, to the district-general."

"And mamma would be able to bespeak a play," said Sophy.

"Depend upon it," resumed Captain Topham, with a ghastly force of expression, "this country will go to ruin one of these days! No answer to my last letter to the Horse Guards, Mrs. Topham!"

"Then I wouldn't write any more. Who's passing there? Oh, it's only Mr. Simmons, the stationer. I must go and order dinner, and ascertain what time the band plays," added the good lady, sailing out of the room, her gallant bearing recalling the days when majors and even colonels pronounced her an "uncommon fine woman."

Lilia was left alone with her cousins. They were showy but ignorant girls, who had picked up education as they might in their erratic course; having a writing-master for three weeks at one place, attending a dancing academy at another, learning a little music from the band-master, and reading a few novels by stealth, papa not approving, mamma conniving; and making dresses in a hasty style, and trimming fly-away bonnets, and even covering old shoes, or pinking their silk stockings, filled up the serious hours of their mortal lives. They spent the rest of their days in walking, or looking out of the window. They were not very handsome, and had had no serious flirtations, but a thousand speculative ones; and lived in anticipations of *the* event coming some day. They spoke loud, as such ladies do; and there was that hardness—not amounting to boldness—which women who live in the military

style contract. Their talk was of regiments of the line, and horse regiments; of captains of this and ensigns of that regiment: of different quarters, and where they should like to live if they had their own way.

They were very happy in being opposite the Hare and Hounds; and had already remarked a very handsome officer, who walked apart from the rest, and had made a point of passing their window at least four times a day.

"He is so like Colonel Clive of the Blues," said Emma.

"Dear, do you think so? *I* consider him like Captain Facer of the Fencibles," cried Sophy, whose world was made up of Blues and Buffs, Fencibles and Rifle corps, Light and Heavy Dragoons, and all those subdivisions of mankind, whom one would suppose, to hear her talk, had come out complete from Noah's ark after the deluge, be-coated and be-booted, and ready for parade.

"La, I declare! there's the band going to play here to day!" cried Caroline, throwing up the window, and tucking up a blind which had a knack of flying in people's faces. Mrs. Topham now entered in a hurry. "Girls, get your bonnets on, and let us walk out!" she said; "I've ordered our bit of dinner; it's no use sitting in doors, and not being seen, and getting acquainted with no one. The Dragoons are to be here a week, I hear; and in that time"—she composed her own desperate looking bonnet at the pier-glass as she spoke—"one may make some little acquaintance with them. Lilia, what do you think of my bonnet? It was a piece of silk I bought at St. Helier's; and I got it made up here. I am very fond of the mixture, blue and orange. 'Tis so simple; I hate your gaudy bonnets. At Guernsey, the military ladies had a style of their own; and I assure you no one imitated it. So, you don't go out this morning?"

"No, I thank you; I shall hear the band here," replied Lilia, viewing, as she spoke, the preparations which were making for adding a scarlet mantle to the rest of Mrs. Topham's costume.

"Scarlet goes with everything," observed that lady, self-complacently. "Just as you like, my dear; this is liberty-hall. I should have had real lace instead of imitation to this mantle, if those people at the Horse Guards had been civil to us. Upon my word, Topham has done far too much for them." Mrs. Topham then stood with her arms folded in her mantle waiting for her daughters.

They were soon ready; for their habits of running in and out gave to their garments, as it seemed, a sort of spontaneous readiness to invest their ever-active persons; and they did not

trouble themselves with subterranean particularities. The surface was striking and effective; the *unseen* must be imagined, not described.

So soon was the idleness of the borough collected around the band, that the open space before the Hare and Hounds was full of local aristocracy when the young ladies reached the thick of the throng. There were the clergymen's wives and daughters, dowdy and distant, and looking, as Mrs. Topham observed, "in a way that wouldn't have been brooked in Guernsey." And there were the solicitor's sisters, smart and civil, and "sweet girls." There were the banker's nieces, who were above walking, but drove in their carriage, to hear a performance in which the drum and fife were, in those days, the prevailing instruments; for military music had then little other recommendation than noise. Then there was a concourse of tradesmen's wives and families; even as low down as the veterinary surgeon's. Scores of boys—Heaven knows whence these little animals all come;—and some dozens of curtseying little girls, with a few strutting, short officers of the line, filled up the spaces.

The drums and fifes played on, and the ladies walked about until they were tired; but *he* whom Sophy and Emma had remarked, and who, they were sure, had remarked them, did not appear. They came in disappointed and wondering. "However, never mind, they should see him that evening."

They could not stay in, however, but were tempted by the fineness of the day to complete some shoppings, which led them into the very heart of the town, and in which Lilia was induced to accompany them; Mrs. Topham volunteering to walk also as a chaperon, though the truth was, she could never stay in the house when there was any chance of that sort of amusement for which she had lived for years. So, taking Lilia under her arm, she sailed up the main street of ——.

Those were the days in which ladies wore oats, and even wheat-ears in their bonnets, and generally with some respect to the seasons. Mrs. Topham's bonnet displayed, however, in this early spring, a fine drop of bearded barley, nodding over a bright blue bonnet. The attraction, added to that of her scarlet cloth mantle, was considerable, and drew the regards, as she marched up the street, of a considerable drove of vicious-looking oxen, which were approaching in an opposite-looking direction. The alarm might have been obviated by a timely retreat into a shop; but there was a knot of officers, some of them dragoons, too, in the street; and Mrs. Topham turned hastily round to her daughters.

"How dangerous! There's Major Faucourt, Caroline;—what a nuisance! Sophy, that's Captain Carter's brother's brother-in-law, of the 9th Foot. I am extremely alarmed!"

Several well-bred men, hearing these ejaculation, turned round, and begged her not to be frightened, as there was no cause for alarm; but recommended her standing on the steps of a dwelling-house, to avoid the dust.

"I am infinitely obliged to you. Mrs. Topham: Mrs. Captain Topham, of his majesty's 2d Royals. Captain Topham must be known to you, I am sure."

The gentlemen lifted their hats, and bowed with infinite respect; but the searching eyes of Sophy and Caroline found not, among the group, him whom they had eulogised to their cousin as the "first of men." At that moment, walking pensively down on the opposite side of the street, looking as if he saw nobody, and cared for nothing, the incognito appeared.

Caroline announced the event by a violent seizure of Lilia's arm. "There he is! Isn't he handsome? Bless me! you're crimson," she exclaimed, surprised at the confusion of Lilia,—"Do you know him? and what is his name?"

"It is a neighbour of ours," replied Lilia, in much agitation,—"Mr. Elphinstone, who, I thought, was gone abroad."

"No to Ireland, the dragoons are ordered," said Sophy. What a pity that we were on this side of the way! If it hadn't been for mamma, we should have been on the other."

Mrs. Topham, meantime, was exchanging compliments with some of the elderly officers, and beginning a sort of antique flirtation, which she had continued to keep up for years, without losing her character, and which the impertinent height of growing daughters did not check;—it only altered the statistics of her conquests. This enterprise ended in her discovering that she knew the connections of four of these officers, who instantly accompanied her to be introduced to Captain Topham.

She well knew he was from home, but thought it necessary to regret it, nevertheless; and then, running through the whole Army List, she discovered that the officers and herself had at least fifty acquaintances in common. Then they were introduced to her daughters, and then to Miss Lilia Howard. "My niece—my brother, Mr. Howard, of Haskreton Manor—his daughter." And then the events of the day came under review:—the wretched dulness of ——, the miserable weather, the poor company of performers, and the dearness of provisions contrasted with Guernsey. As to society, of course there was none. At last, after an hour's chat, the visitors departed, with every promise of meeting again in the evening.

That evening was long in arriving; for the days at —— consisted of sixteen hours instead of twelve, Mrs. Topham observed. But everything has a limit, and at length the ladies stood before the entrance of the theatre, and heard the sound of the fiddles of the orchestra without.

It was a gay scene that night, from the regimentals and cocked hats that came and went; and the poor players did their best. The venerable father of the company mouthed out his orations with peculiar pathos; and the young lady added, by particular desire, as suitable to the occasion, "The Soldier Tired of War's Alarms," to "Tarry awhile with me, my Love, Oh! Tarry awhile with me." All was very exciting, and went off well. Captain Topham, once or twice, relapsed into a grim laugh, and Mrs. Topham clapped the performers, "on account of their feelings." But, alas! *he* came not. Lilia's heart beat fast whenever the box doors were opened and shut, but to no avail.

As Mrs. Topham was handed down stairs to her calash—for "she preferred walking home," she said, "by an elderly officer,' she was instigated by Sophy to ask if he knew Mr. Elphinstone.

"A little; why do you ask?"

"Oh! dear, nothing particular; I didn't see him here to-night."

"No: I heard he was ill," replied the officer, as he folded around Mrs. Topham a decayed fur tippet, and handed her her pattens.

The ladies went home; the officer returned to the Hare and Hounds. It was late, and he intended to retire to rest; but he was a good-natured man, and he thought he would just look in at his poor comrade, Elphinstone, first. He opened the door of a small bedchamber, gently, and looked in.

The invalid was lying in what seemed to the officer to be an uneasy sleep. He had been struck down, suddenly, that morning, as it were, by a stroke of that relentless mower, Death. A seizure, somewhat like a fainting-fit, had been the first symptoms of that malignant fever to which the agitation of his mind predisposed him. He had with difficulty been supported by his servant to his room.

"Poor fellow!" muttered the officer, "I am glad he sleeps;" and he closed the door, and went to his own chamber.

But he slept *not*, although his eyes were closed: visions were before them—the visions of childhood and of youth—the happy scenes of those careless periods which seem to haunt us most when least their bliss comes, as a keen contrast to the present. The bells of a church in the lonesome English village

where, in Lady Janet's wanderings, she had rested for some months with her sons, rang in his ears—a well-known sound: the flowers of their cottage-garden advanced and retired before his eyes; fair landscapes, with the blue tints of distance, arose in rapid succession before him—he could not catch their beauties; they were scarcely pictured to his eyes ere they were withdrawn, and fresh objects became perceptible; voices, too, familiar and dear, were close to his ear; and convictions of certain events having occurred, fixed themselves, unassisted, unexplained, in his mind; and still came and went these bright landscapes, and still muttered those voices, until the fevered sufferer strove to answer them; and the first breathings of delirium were heard in that silent chamber.

The family opposite, in some senses, shared his distress. For a few days, indeed, they were unconscious of them: then came the departure of the detachment: his comrades rode past the house of Captain Topham, and lingering looks at the window were cast by the officers; but among them one was missing—Mr. Elphinstone did not appear.

The gay uniforms wended their way down the street, and, passing onwards, left the town of —— to utter desolation. Mrs. Topham, in a sort of industrial paroxysm, got out a large basket of stockings to mend: Sophy wished there were barracks, and a regular force, as at Guernsey; and Caroline regretted that the detachment had ever been there; and a sort of vindictive vexation was aroused whenever the poor recruiting officers were mentioned: a resolute grief was maintained the whole day.

Meantime, consolation was at hand. Towards the afternoon, it was discovered that Mr. Elphinstone had not gone with the troop, but had been left behind ill, at the Hare and Hounds—very ill—even dangerously ill: the excitement rose to a pitch when it was discovered that his illness was a fever. Mrs. Topham had instantly a thousand parallels: she had seen officers carried off in handfuls by that very fever. She had known it at Chatham, she had heard of it at Weedon, and had had a slight attack of it herself. Captain Topham, who was chilly and nervous, was certain that he was himself going to have it. It was a miserable day for him and Lilia; for Mrs. Topham was revelling in the luxuries of long strings of horrors—of graves not made fast enough—coffins at a premium, and promotion fearfully rapid in consequence,—to every one except Captain Topham.

Lilia, it may be supposed, had few sympathies in common with her relations. Hers was a character of shrinking delicacy, coupled with its natural companion, great reserve,

except to those whom she really liked; and she could no more have revealed her deeply seated sentiments for Mr. Elphinstone to her aunt and cousins than to her father or her mother-in-law. She cherished them in pensive silence: the nature of youth is to be hopeful in illness—insensible to danger; for, alas! it is in bereavements that we learn how "small a matter kindleth a great fire;" from what apparent trifles disease seems to arise and to run its course; how obvious that course is! how little we can foretell, much less arrest its progress!

Mrs. Topham, however, began to be suspicious, more especially as she observed that Lilia grew pale and thin under the pressure of anxiety—symptoms Mrs. Topham realised in her own eventful youth, when Captain Topham's addresses were opposed; and Lilia's favourite post was in an attic in the high, uncomfortable house, when she could see a window in the inn, and fancy that there must poor Bernard be lying. It was lighted up at night, but the window still, in that changeful season, left open. Now and then the form of the medical man, as Lilia supposed, flitted across the window: one night she observed two figures there. Meantime, the accounts of the invalid were worse and worse, and the reports of his being in imminent danger ran through the town. These were, indeed, but too true: the long continued anxieties, added to the prevalence of infection, had produced a fever of the worst species. His brother, as it was announced, was sent for, and was expected to arrive immediately.

The invalid had been lying for some days unconscious, after a paroxysm of delirium, when Sholto hung over him. An angry sorrow at first sat upon his countenance. He took not the judgments of Heaven kindly, but rebelled against the chastening hand. It was, however, impossible to stand long *there*, to look upon the strong laid low, the buoyant blasted, without being subdued; Sholto, after giving way to a passion of grief, looked on, and was softened. He spoke supplicatingly to those around him, and appealed to the medical man for consolation: little in the way of hope was afforded, and Sholto flung himself on the bed in anguish. He was endeared to his brother by the nobleness and kindliness of that now passionless heart, and recent adversity had knit more firmly the bonds which had never been shaken by fraternal tyranny or selfishness.

"Yet it is as well that he should die," he groaned; "for to live humiliated, trampled upon, is not fit for *him*." He was melted at the thoughts of the last few months, and of all that Bernard had borne, so heroically, yet so mildly. Meantime,

on the opposite side of the way, intelligence, aided by those thousand various channels which Mrs. Topham and her daughters knew so well how to engage, had arrived of Mr. Elphinstone's danger.

The surgeon of the regiment just called in, too, to give the cheering opinion that Mr. Elphinstone would not live through the night. Lilia was in her attic when the good-hearted family below heard, in a silence of real feeling, the awful fiat. Mrs. Topham shed a tear or two over her basket of stockings. Captain Topham walked about the room. It was *his* way of showing concern; but, after a time, symptoms of revival took place, and when the surgeon departed it was with a smile and a bow, returned by smiles and bows too.

Mrs. Topham, however, stole up stairs—no easy process, in her case; she entered her niece's room, and found her as usual rivetted to the window; her hands were now clasped together, and she was fixed as if she strove to penetrate the gloom of the chamber opposite. The shades of the evening were, indeed, closing in.

"Lilia, dear!" said Mrs. Topham.

Lilia turned upon her a face of woe, and drawing her to the window, said, "All is so still there, that I am—I am afraid"——she gasped—she stopped short, threw herself into her aunt's arms, and cried—"Aunt Topham, console me!"

"Why, my dear," returned Mrs. Topham, penetrating at once her secret, and taking it as a matter of course, "he's not dead *yet!* 'Don't let us fret for the steed till he's stolen,' as the saying is."

Lilia was mute for a moment. "Then there *is* danger?" she said, solemnly. "And though so near, we are not to bid each other farewell! Oh, aunt, I cannot yet say—God's will be done!" She wept piteously.

"Nor do I think, at present, it would be fitting that you should," cried Mrs. Topham. "But I'll tell you what I'll do, Lilia; I'll go over and see him myself. Nurses have often recovered people when doctors have failed. I'm an old hand at these matters."

Lilia clasped the kind creature again in her arms. "But infection!" she exclaimed; suddenly recoiling at her own selfishness, as it seemed, in permitting her aunt to run this risk.

"Never mind," replied Mrs. Topham, calmly; "there's a great deal in courage, and I have faced a regiment, I may say, of patients of this kind. Besides, Lilia," she upraised her arms, and, looking up, added, "God has protected me and mine by sea and by land; will he forget me when I visit this poor lonely young man, think you?"

"Ah! dear aunt, how can I ever repay you?"

"And what have you to do with it?" cried Mrs. Topham. "La! the old story; I must hear it to-morrow, for there is no time to be lost."

"Would that I could go with you!" exclaimed Lilia.

"And just finish him off at once," said Mrs. Topham, "as poor Captain Carleton was, when his wife and six children would come to take leave of him: he was doing as well as could be desired till then; the pulse mounted up at the instant, and before he had taken leave of the youngest, who were twins, he was, as one might say, a dead man. Well, my dear, I shall not have much trouble in awaking you when I come back, I dare say."

Sholto, meantime, hung in speechless sorrow over his brother, and he was found shedding tears freely over his brother's pillow by no less a person than Mrs. Topham, who entered the room somewhat abruptly.

Kindness was, indeed, the main source of her visit; curiosity had its own share therein. Yet the effort was a noble one, and might redeem some follies, and give even a grace to the wearer of the scarlet mantle. Mrs. Topham's Amazonian constitution had already been signalised in dépôts and at outstations. Not nice in her modes of kindness, and stopping not to ask—"Do I commit myself by this?" she had often sat up at night with her husband's sick comrades when others were exhausted. She had seen illness in its worst varieties, and was proof against infection; "and hearing," as she said, "that poor Mr. Elphinstone was dying, she came over to volunteer her services and experience." Sholto took the handerchief from his eyes, and looked at her suspiciously, as much as to say—Who are you? But concluding, from her portly figure, and the desultory style of her dress, that she was the good woman of the house, he merely asked her, "if she had seen that what the doctor had order as nourishment to Mr. Elphinstone was prepared?"

"Not at all," said Mrs. Topham, standing at the bottom of the bed, and gazing with scientific calmness on the sufferer, "I am no friend to gruel, and I have ordered them below to make him—your brother, I presume—some good, comfortable white-wine whey."

Sholto, even in the midst of his grief, could not help smiling at what he thought a characteristic recommendation.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Topham, whilst her good-natured face was bedewed with a tear, "there he has been lying, and there he will lie for some time more, in that stupor. I have seen dozens just in the same way, as if they were breathing

their last. There was poor Major Roberts, whom all the doctors gave up, got better as soon as ever he could drink claret and water, which we get for nothing, as the saying is, in Guernsey —just given away there."

"You must have had great experience," said Sholto, somewhat disgusted at the liberties taken, even in the sick-room. Sorrow, the leveller, reduced not his pride, for his was the pride of a small mind, pent up and embittered by circumstances. "Do not let me detain you from your family affairs."

"Oh! they are *not* pressing—only two girls, thank God—quite enough to move about with—and a poor thing of a niece, who is gone to bed crying her heart out to think that your brother is so ill. She knows you both, she told me. By-the-by, I was in such a hurry to come up stairs, I wouldn't let them announce me. Captain Topham, of the 2nd Royals, is well known. Mrs. Topham. I am sister of Mr. Howard, of Haskreton Manor, and was born there, and married there," added Mrs. Topham, slackening her tone. "We are stationed here for I don't know how long,—God knows! But, now, my dear young gentleman, 'tis of no use your standing here fretting. I came to be of service; something must be done: this patient," she added, in a decisive tone, "is dying for want of support."

How grateful we are for the tone of decision in great emergencies! Sholto, notwithstanding his disgust at all her advances, caught at the idea.

"Get up a bottle of wine!" said Mrs. Topham, impressively. "They're an age making the white-wine whey. I've seen men slip through one's fingers before it could be boiled."

She sat down, and took the passive hand of the handsome sufferer. "Ah! a little touch of the heart. It well may be," she said to herself, and her thoughts reverted to the sudden agonies of the poor girl when first she heard that it was Mr. Elphinstone who was ill. The mother's heart—that one touch of softness not extinguished in Mrs. Topham—was softened within her. "Poor thing! with a step-mother, too!—and my brother never was much of a man for feeling. Ah! well, we mustn't let him die."

"I wish, sir," she said, as Sholto entered, the wine carried after him, "we had our own regimental surgeon here. Captain Topham had confidence in him. Your brother has been kept too low. I've been known to take a bottle of Madeira a-day myself, when I had it; and five of our men were taken off in two days for want of wine. However, we shall, I hope, save this one case."

She planted herself by the bedside, and there she remained almost until dawn. It was just that state in which a total change of plan is often adopted by the skilful. Medicine had proved of no avail, and the only chance was to rouse the system.

Sholto stood by, alternately grateful and disgusted ; obliged by the kindness, offended by the freedoms of Mrs. Topham : yet she succeeded. After midnight, there was a manifest consciousness in the invalid. The medical man came, and pronounced that the pulse was quieter, and hope dawned with the morning.

Mrs. Topham hastened across the road home in a very unbecoming complication of evening-dress and sick-room wrappings. The door was opened for her by Lilia, who grasped her arm without speaking.

"Better, undoubtedly!" Lilia's head sunk upon her shoulder. At that instant, the poor girl felt of how little moment are refinement, sense, education, in the sorrows of our destiny, compared with *kindness*. Mrs. Topham patted her pale cheek, and said, "I see how it is." Lilia offered no denial. "Well, I think he'll recover. Indeed, as I may say, the corner is turned ; he'll do very well. Several of the officers in the detachment were sickening from the fever when they went away. I've no doubt there'll be rapid promotion. But what does my brother think of your liking this handsome young officer ?"

Lilia was obliged to own that her father knew nothing about the ill-starred attachment, as it was denominated ; and Mrs. Topham, in some amazement, a little envious, nevertheless, that so quiet a girl as Lilia should captivate a fine young man, whilst Sophy and Caroline had been less successful, dismissed her to bed ; longing, however, for a long explanation.

The following day was, however, in Mrs. Topham's abode, the event of that elegant misery entitled a wash. With very small means, and only two servants—every article of living being, in those days, double what it is now, for it was the period of the war—the wash was as important an affair as living or dying could be. Everything was given up to it. The family dined on cold meat : the servants went about tucked up and slipshod all day. When the door was reluctantly opened to strangers, a gust of steam greeted the adventurer who came at the wrong time. The accustomary charwoman made her appearance as head-waiter at dinner, and you might get your tea as you could. These, and other atmospheric inconveniences—such as being in a vapour-bath all morning from the washhouse, and in an oven all evening from the ironing in the kitchen below—produced an extra sub-acute

irritation in Captain Topham's system; he even became lachrymose before dinner, was brought to with difficulty, and never was himself on the wash-days.

Mrs. Topham, though she poured forth volumes of regrets for Guernsey, where dozens were washed, and ironed, and sent home, rather for love than money, passed off everything as a soldier's wife should do, and seemed in the morning to thrive in the vapour-bath, and found the ironing no inconvenience in the evening.

By common consent, however, all the family gave themselves up to misery, and to those nameless, unsightly jobs of work, which shake so forcibly one's self-respect in the performance. All the young ladies hoped was not to be caught; but they were "caught." A ring at the bell came just as Sophy had finished turning the skirt of a gown, and had not put it away. A pile of woollen stockings lay, *ad libitum*, on the table. Up limped the old charwoman, deaf as a post. It was in vain that Caroline screamed out, "Sally! Sally! say we're gone out!" There was an ominous parleying at the door; then the clang of a boot up the passage; then, and only then, Sally took off her brown apron, and endeavoured to assume a decent appearance. Then—and there was no retreat—no commode—no sofa to hide one's sins of commission under—no back door—no corner a little shadier than the rest—then entered a gentleman, so strikingly elegant, so exquisitely dressed, so incomparably turned out altogether, that even the old charwoman grinned with satisfaction as she ushered him into the room.

"A gentleman as wants to see Miss Lilia, ladies."

Lord Ravenspur—for it was that individual—now made himself known to the young ladies. He spoke with the deepest deference; sat down upon a heap of cotton with an elegant unconsciousness of evil, looked as if he had been used to see stockings mended all his life, and cast not even a glance at the skirt which stood alone in the corner of the room. Then he begged a thousand pardons for having, he feared, made a mistake; he had called to see Miss Howard. "Lady Ravenspur," he hypocritically said, "had charged him with compliments and inquiries."

"Lady Ravenspur! Oh!" said Sophy, whose ideas had mounted up castle-wise, and now came to earth again.

"My cousin does not seem well," observed Caroline.

Lord Ravenspur regretted it, and hoped he should, nevertheless, be able to take a good report of Miss Howard, as he was going to stay a few days in the neighbourhood. And then he talked so easily and gaily of the events of the day; the

dulness of ——, of the departure of the officers—a theme that touched one universal chord in the female heart, he well knew—that Sophy was deeply hurt to think that he was married; and Caroline secretly hoped that "Lady Ravenspur" was his mother. Could a married man be so delightful?

The colloquy was interrupted by the odious charwoman opening the door, and saying, in no very courtly phrase, "Miss 'Oward can't see your, sir—she's ill; but the Missus will be down directly."

Lord Ravenspur bit his lip; and there was something malignant in the smile with which he said, "Very well. Much illness in this neighbourhood?" he asked, carelessly.

"Oh yes," answered Sophy, "an immense deal! There's a gentleman very ill—dying—at the Hare and Hounds. He was given over the night before last. Mamma went last night to see him;—his brother's here, and he has two doctors night and day."

"His name's Elphinstone," said Caroline.

"Elphinstone? Indeed! And his Christian name?"

"Bernard."

"Surely I know him slightly. I hope that Miss Howard's illness is not the result of—I mean, I hope there's nothing *infectious* in her case?"

"Oh dear, no!" said Sophy.

At this crisis of their discourse, a loud talking on the stairs, a heavy step, and a rustling of a tabinet gown, hastily pinned on, announced the approach of Mrs. Topham.

"I beg a million of pardons, Mr. ——, may I ask what name? or, perhaps, you're a brother officer? What regiment do you belong to?"

"I have not the honour to serve his majesty," answered Lord Ravenspur, "though I deem the military the first order of men."

"Exactly my sentiments," cried Mrs. Topham, arranging a stray curl so as to form just a sort of hook on the centre of her forehead, and glancing at the glass.

"Mamma, mamma, Lord Ravenspur!" whispered Sophy.

"Lord Ravenspur! then I know where I am. Lord Ravenspur! bless me! the young Lord Ravenspur! Why, it seems but yesterday since you and I were boy and girl together. I am proud, indeed, to see you. And how is your cousin, General Tracey, of the 4th Light? I have danced with him many and many a time at Gibraltar."

"You do him honour," said Lord Ravenspur.

"We military people generally find ourselves at home everywhere," rejoined Mrs. Topham; "I can't walk across the

street without meeting an old friend. But I am distressed to think that a little washing—which I gave my servants only to occupy them—for it's a duty not to let them be idle—should annoy one so in the house; and, for myself, I've hardly been in bed last night; for a poor young man——" she thought of Lilia's secret, and stopped short.

"Ah! yes," said Lord Ravenspur, condolingly. "Your niece, too, is indisposed?"

Mrs. Topham gave a meaning, mysterious look; then, recollecting herself, said, "She has a right to be delicate; her mother was so before her."

"You, perhaps, know Mr. Elphinstone, my lord?" asked Sophy.

"Why—yes, I do certainly. He is well known—too well known—in our county," said Lord Ravenspur.

"You don't say so? Too well known!" cried Mrs. Topham. "In—deed! I must look after Lilia, though," she thought, "and write to my brother."

"The hero of the famous Elphinstone cause," resumed Lord Ravenspur. "He has a brother, too, I think?"

Mrs. Topham leaned forwards eagerly. "He has; 'tis the very same, my lord."

"Oh, yes;" said Lord Ravenspur, contemptuously; "there can but be one such family in the world."

"Really!" cried good Mrs. Topham, quite excited. She was a woman of impulse, meaning always to do well, unsuspicious, and incapable of manœuvres; she reflected for a moment, then, recollecting that her visitor was a lord, a neighbour of her brother's, and evidently conversant with Mr. Elphinstone's history, she thought it might be as well to consult him. "My lord!" she exclaimed, suddenly; "Yes,—no—don't trouble yourself—yet, on second thoughts, I think I had better see your lordship alone for a few minutes." She arose as she spoke, and held the door open. "If I were at Guernsey, I could lead your lordship into a second drawing-room, of a noble height, with pier-glasses, I assure you. I must first beg your lordship to excuse Captain Topham's own private room, where he transacts his business with the Horse Guards, and other matters."

She then led into a chamber of a manifold character—a dressing room and library in one: here were Captain Topham's best boots, there was the army list; here was his dressing-room, and there "The Complete Art of Gunnery." A small fire burned in the grate, and Mrs. Topham, begging Lord Ravenspur to excuse the noise of the mangle from below, opened her communications.

"About this Mr. Elphinstone, my lord. He holds a commission in the Light Dragoons ; that's true enough, I believe. Well, he is taken ill at this vile place, where we are only staying till we get our rights, I assure you ; and when we heard of it, and who he was, my niece, Lilia, falls into a faint. I assure you it took us half an hour to get her into a belief—I had given her a strong dose of camphor-julep, nevertheless—that he was not dead. Now, if he's an impostor, and not worthy of her, I ought to be writing to my brother, to be sure. Pray, let me hear what there is to be said about him—for the honour of the army, if it's only that," added Mrs. Topham, with gallant enthusiasm.

Lord Ravenspur's reply was guarded, but it was effective : for his hatred of Bernard Elphinstone was aggravated by this history of Lilia's feelings. Hope he had none ; he was married : and though, in many instances, that was no barrier to his roaming fancies, it blasted all present hopes of Lilia. But Elphinstone's contempt of him, his superior virtues, his more fortunate powers of attraction, brought to a focus those evil propensities, and that diabolical envy of the good, which bad hearts cherish.

The result of the conference was a resolution on the part of Mrs. Topham to send her niece home.

"No," said Lord Ravenspur, "do not adopt such hasty measures. Take a middle course, my dear madam ; prevent their meeting."

"Ah, very good ! and indeed quite easy, since *he* can't stir," said Mrs. Topham ; "but there'll be no objection, my lord, to *my* seeing the poor sick soul now and then till he's out of the wood, at my time of life ?"

Lord Ravenspur interrupted to assure her that, looking so young, she must not rely on that.

"Well, my lord," replied Mrs. Topham, "you're vastly pleasant, I must say ; but the mother of two grown-up girls need not be so particular."

"Ah, madam !" cried Lord Ravenspur, gaily, "there's an old song which says,—'The daughters begin to shine before the mothers content to fade.'"

"Your lordship's vastly polite." There's nothing like the higher classes, thought Mrs. Topham, as she opened the dressing-room door, and bade his lordship good morning.

"I shall take the liberty of calling to inquire after Miss Lilia's health," he said, as he departed. "Between ourselves," he added, in a whisper, "her prejudice against me is very much owing to my dislike of this Mr. Elphinstone."

"I see it clearly," cried Mrs. Topham. "It was exactly the

same in Captain Carter's case, which your lordship has heard of, no doubt."

Lord Ravenspur professed his ignorance; but would like to hear any such circumstance analogous to his own, which he regarded as one of injustice, or, at least, of misrepresentation.

"He's a very undermining young man, I fear," whispered Mrs. Topham, who now stood on the front steps; "but he's ill, and I'm not accustomed, my lord, to be particular in such cases as these; it may be wrong."

"No," interrupted his lordship; "if it is, 'tis the fault of angels——"

His manner was so gallant, that Mrs. Topham retreated, quite excited. "A most charming man, girls! but—just our usual luck—married: else I should say—but that's only a joke—he was an admirer of Lilia's. Sophia, that seems a forlorn hope of a silk stocking, my dear; leave it for me, I'm a capital hand at repairs. Well, now I will just go over and see if the poor young man—whom we must *not* like, it seems—has spoken at all yet, and how he took his whey."

She sailed across to the Hare and Hounds; whilst Lord Ravenspur, turning in a contrary direction, met a group of gentlemen, and joined them.

He mounted his horse, and the group circling around him, he rode towards Eridge Lodge, a small hunting-box belonging to his lordship, where he threw off the forms of propriety which were encumbent upon him to maintain at Haskreton, and where such scenes were enacted as rendered it impossible for any lady of character ever to set foot on the threshold.

As he approached this, his present home. Lord Ravenspur was joined by Aylmer, and the rest of his companions left him until the evening.

As the gentlemen, slackening their pace, proceeded, Lord Ravenspur imparted to his friend the events of the morning. After running over other incidents, he said—

"Oh! the fair Miss Howard is at ——; of course *you* know that?"

"I heard that she was here before we left Haskreton," replied Aylmer, slightly colouring as he spoke; "and so, I believe, did you, Ravenspur." They rode into a narrow lane, which, after passing through a small sequestered village, turned across the country, leaving to the left the humble church, and continuing until it was terminated by a vast and wild common.

"I would give the universe," said Lord Ravenspur, slackening his speed, "to humble that insolent wretch, Elphinstone, and to disappoint him of this girl. How have they met at —— but by design?"

"And he is base enough to draw her into his misfortunes," observed Aylmer, gloomily.

Lord Ravenspur smiled, and yet was silent. "A pleasant thought has struck me," he observed, after a pause of some moments.

Aylmer looked at him earnestly, yet not without some degree of anxiety, for he knew too well what was the nature of those pleasant thoughts in which Lord Ravenspur indulged.

"Shall I tell it you?" Lord Ravenspur began, glancing at his companion, the dim light scarcely permitting him to see what impression his words might make upon Aylmer.

"Of course; but if it is to injure *her*——" Aylmer replied, with some agitation.

"Of course *not*. Aylmer, let us speak plainly: you love that girl, and why should you not have her?"

"Why not?" repeated Aylmer, disconsolately. "For sundry reasons—first, from want of fortune; secondly, from want of character; thirdly, because she loves another."

"Those are points which *I* can obviate," said Lord Ravenspur. "With regard to fortune, there's a portion of Lady Ravenspur's which I must have, and which would make a vastly pretty provision for you. Want of character! Do you think it makes the slightest difference with women?" continued Lord Ravenspur, contemptuously; "your fame has not yet reached the acmé of mine, yet I'll forswear myself if I might not wed any woman free to wed in Christendom."

"But she is not *free* to wed," said Aylmer.

"Then let us free her! Let us arouse his jealousy, and see if he will not free her fast enough. Already they have had their differences, already he has been jealous."

"Of *you*," returned Aylmer, his lip quivering as he uttered the word. "Ravenspur, I am not utterly lost; let not that occur again. Occur! good God! It cannot!—it cannot in reason—she is pure and good!—too good, believe me, for us to assail. No; choose some other agent. I will not be a party in any scheme which will affect her happiness."

"But I seek to ensure it," said Lord Ravenspur; "*I* want to save her from an impostor—a beggar—a man who can never hold up his head in society again. You know that, Aylmer?"

"I do; but still—still he has more character than either you or I," Aylmer would have said, but he suppressed those words.

They rode on sometime in silence; Lord Ravenspur was undaunted, for he knew the weakness of his relative, and remembered how often, from boys, his own influence had mastered the last efforts of expiring principle; how often Aylmer had resisted, how invariably yielded.

They now gained a common, and the setting sun gleamed upon the budding furze, and on the cattle which ranged there free.

"I could wish to see you married to the fair, gentle Lilia, Aylmer," said Lord Ravenspur, as they gained the hill.

"But—how—is that *all* you wish?" asked Aylmer, his eye glancing fire as he spoke. "Have you no ultimate ends in view?"

"Upon my honour, no; nothing but your happiness; and, perhaps," added Lord Ravenspur, with a sanctimonious air, "it may, as my Lady Ravenspur would say, 'end in your reformation.'"

They had now turned into the domain around Eridge Lodge. A narrow road led up an ascent, through a dark wood, to the eminence on which the lodge was seated. As you proceeded, distant views of the country were caught by openings made in the dense thicket by which the lodge was surrounded. The road wound up to the house, a plain and modern structure in the villa style, then so infrequent, now common to satiety. But around this isolated dwelling there was a scene fair enough to soften the sternest natures, and meet for blessed spirits to look down upon and revisit. From a large plat of turf you could gaze upon the richest woodland scenes of England, varied here and there by the farm-stead, and viewed through a vista of the noblest trees. The plat was embroidered with the richest flowers of spring, in beds, opposite to the house; on one side was a lawn, similar in extent, but garnished with cedars, with the feathery larch, and shaded by delicate evergreens. One would have deemed that this seclusion, which all about was enhanced by seats, and—except from the songs of birds, perfectly tranquil, and the distant sheep-bell on the common—might have been the choice alone of innocence and contentment. But guilt seeks the shade as well as humility.

The plot whereon Eridge stood was, as it were, cleared out from the thick woods around; above, the hill still rising, they closed around the gardens, and were intersected by walks. One feature alone broke the almost mournful quiet of this retreat. This was a small farm, seated on the outskirts of the wood, and essential for the supply of the house. It was guarded by fierce dogs, whose deep voices now broke upon the ear of Lord Ravenspur as he stood beneath the porch of the lodge, whilst waiting for the door to be opened.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STRATAGEM.

The recovery of Bernard Elphinstone was, meantime, progressive yet sure; and hope and happiness again beamed on Lilia's countenance.

Mrs. Topham had become, nevertheless, very reserved on the subject of the invalid; she still, with a kindness which she could not lay aside, visited him sometimes, and brought indefinite reports of his state, prefacing them always with "Don't ask me, my dear, for really I ought not to encourage this folly of yours,—but he *is* better;"—and then murmured something about its being a relief to her when he was gone. At the same time she wrote to her brother, and begged of him to consider how far Lilia might remain at —— with safety to her peace of mind, since she had, she conceived, formed a very imprudent attachment.

Having thus acted with discretion, Mrs. Topham, in a great measure, dismissed the affair from her mind, and, as another detachment was marching in, she was soon occupied in her usual manner,—parading about when there was a band, shopping and marketing in the dirtiest and most decayed of garments in the morning, and coming out outrageously smart in the afternoon.

Sholto looked out of the window upon all this. It is wonderful how invidiously we gaze upon everything from an opposite house. We see in part, but we make out a great deal, which is seldom to the advantage of others.

As his fears for his brother abated, Sholto's gratitude to Mrs. Topham declined. It was true that she had, by a little timely interposition, contributed to save his brother's life,—but then, "from what motive had she done it? From a love of meddling, no doubt." She was not a woman to be governed by higher motives: that Sholto saw; and his quick sense of the ridiculous had plenty to feed upon in Mrs. Topham's voice, dress, manner. Ungoverned in his feelings, he found it difficult, at length, to receive her civilly, and began to wish that her mission of mercy would end.

One day, taking a walk for exercise, he saw a lady coming towards him, whose simple dignity and blooming beauty attracted, as he perceived, the attention of all who passed her.

She did not see him, but she walked on, with that modest propriety which seemed but little suited to the house—to the abode of Mrs. Topham. Sholto went on his way pondering. "Oh, ho!" he exclaimed, "this is the explanation of the whole affair. I thought there must be some motive at the bottom of it. *Here* is the source of Mrs. Topham's wonderful philanthropy. She thought, no doubt, that it would be a pity to lose the opportunity of producing a tender rencontre between my brother and Miss Howard."

It did not occur to Sholto that the part of most worldly relations would have been to keep a young lady noted for her beauty from any participation in the fallen fortunes of Bernard Elphinstone, for Sholto's pride was so habitual and confirmed that it acted upon him independently of reasoning.

At first, Sholto thought it would be the best plan not to let his brother know that Lilia was in the same town, but he found it impossible. When Bernard was suffered to sit up, his first object, like that of most invalids, was to go to the window. It was a delight to him to look upon the sunshine—to see even the boys at play—to hail the arrival of the mail-coach. The beauties of nature were not luxuriant there, but there were a few budding trees in the open space, and he was just opposite to Captain Topham's house.

His medical man presided over his first removal to the easy-chair. "There, sir! now you'll have the best view of the band when it plays to morrow. Lean a little to this side. There you see the church, and a little bit of the town-hall. That's our mayor, walking, sir, with his hands in his pockets, and, stay, there's—yes, I declare it is! the belle of the place just now, sir, Miss Howard—Miss Lilia Howard—walking with her aunt, that stout, fine lady, who was so good as to visit you, but who, in my opinion, nearly sent you to your grave—Mrs. Captain Topham."

The pale face of Bernard was suffused with colour as he looked on the well-known figure of Lilia Howard, that rivetted him till she disappeared. He then turned to Sholto, and said, hastily, "Why Sholto, my dear Sholto, why did you not tell me of this?"

"I thought it wouldn't interest you," replied Sholto, looking at the medical man, and then at Bernard, as if to guard his brother from any disclosure.

"Oh, ho!" said the medical man, who was young and spruce, "it is time your brother should be interested in such a toast and belle, though it is said—I do not vouch for the truth—that she is going to be married to a gentleman of the name of Aylmer."

Bernard's face flushed as he raised himself, and said, almost angrily, "There is no truth in that, sir, I give you my assurance."

The medical man bowed, took his leave, and disappeared. "Are you not afraid," asked Sholto, coming forward, "of *reports*, if you take upon you to give such very precise information about Mr. Aylmer and Miss Howard?"

"Of what should I be afraid?" returned Bernard; "yes, of *her* delicacy, of the disapproval of her friends I might; for my own part, I should be proud to have my own name coupled to that of Miss Howard."

"Oh, very well; I didn't know how matters stood," replied Sholto, shrinking away, dismayed, to the opposite window.

Bernard could hardly be induced to return to his bed till late at night. His eyes were incessantly directed to a certain window, where, once or twice, a figure was seen—only once or twice—then it disappeared, and left the young lover the melancholy happiness of gazing on vacancy.

"She does not make her appearance so often as usual," remarked Sholto, "for she's generally there all day."

"Does she—does she know that I am here?" asked Bernard, in a faltering tone.

"I do not know; oh, yes, of course, Mrs. Topham must have told it."

Meantime, much that was going on in the opposite house could not be divined by the observant brothers. It was but too true that Mr Aylmer was almost incessantly a visitor at Captain Topham's. In the first place, that house had its especial attractions for him; in the next, it was not a repelling house. Some such there are, that one knows almost by the knocker, have a "not at home" on their aspect. Many require courage in the storming of a fortress barricaded with forms, and supplied with an ammunition of measured civility to greet you. But Captain Topham's house had a door ever open, except on wash-days; windows, from which living pictures welcomed you in; if at dinner, why should you not dine too? if at tea, what so sociable as a "dish of tea?" Poverty had not chilled their hospitality; indeed, it is certain that the poorest people have generally the largest supply of that virtue. Mr. Aylmer experienced, therefore, little difficulty in repeated visits; the difficulty to be apprehended was from Lilia herself. But she found in his apparent dejection a sympathy she not only endured, but liked in him; and though there were moments when a transient expression of his countenance startled her, there was such a rigid decorum in his manners, that she

rejected any thought unworthy of him, as unworthy of herself.

Meantime, the ardour of his passion for Lilia grew; and whilst it was, perhaps, the least guilty of any predilection which the unfortunate Mr. Aylmer entertained, it was still the attachment of a sensual nature. It mastered him, for he was singularly weak, though endowed with excellent abilities. He was ready to run every risk, even that of injuring for ever the peace and reputation of the woman whom he loved, to win her, whether he gained a reluctant hand, and bore her away like a beautiful yet broken flower, drooping and faded, or whether she ever blessed him with a free consent and a fond heart. For that he hoped not; of that he could perceive there was *no* chance; yet still the designs which he had at first *rejected* became dear to one who struggled but faintly with temptation.

Bernard, meantime, was gaining strength rapidly, and his first effort was to write, and request that he might pay his respects to Mrs. Topham and to Miss Howard. To his surprise, a refusal, couched good-naturedly, but yet decisive, was the reply to this request. Sholto found him, after receiving it, agitated, and almost ill again. Bernard put the note into his hand. "It is *not* Lilia's doing, I am certain," he said, firmly.

Sholto drew him to the window. Lilia and Mr. Aylmer were at this moment crossing the street together. "She knows his character," he whispered, "and yet what construction can you put on *that?* The whole connection," he added, bitterly, "is so low, so vulgar, so disreputable, in all appearance; they may be excellent people at heart, but——"

He was interrupted by Bernard's hastily putting on his cloak. "Sholto," he said, with much agitation, "I must see Miss Howard to-night. To-morrow I must join my regiment: *you* know the orders. To-night, at every risk, I will see her: I will ask her if my feelings are to be outraged, and even my honour sullied, by this misconduct: I will insist upon a satisfactory explanation, or we never meet again.

He quitted the house hastily, repeating to himself that he did not doubt Lilia: nor did he do her that injustice. But a man who seriously intends to make a woman his wife regards even the slightest deviations from propriety in a very different light from that in which a casual admirer is likely to consider them.

He rushed across the street, and knocked at the door. It was true that Lilia and Mr. Aylmer had taken an opposite direction; but Elphinstone was resolved to wait until they returned. He was determined on admittance; but he was told that Miss Howard had gone—gone away entirely; a ser-

vant had fetched her in a post-chaise, from home ; she had ordered it to follow her, and to call for her at the house where she was to take leave of Mrs. Topham, who was out. Bernard, asking the direction, walked, still feeble as he was, to the house : but Miss Howard had just left it, the servant there said, to go home. She had left—" for good."

Bernard's first impulse was to see Mrs. Topham, and yet to what avail ? His proud nature shrank from the interview, and he returned slowly, his trembling limbs scarcely having power to carry him to the inn.

At break of day, he was aroused to commence his journey, no further leave being permitted, and he quitted England for Ireland.

He passed Captain Topham's house in the melancholy twilight of the dawn, so different from that of evening. He looked up at the window where he had seen Lilia, and the conviction of her gentleness, her simplicity, and warmth of heart, seemed to return to him. Away from Sholto—his bane —his generous mind righted itself. The soldier went forth into the world to mix with the reckless, but not with the crafty. The delicacy of his moral feelings might suffer, but the broad lines of truth, the nice sense of honour, the good fellowship, the honest confidence, flourished in the community with brave men. In the absence from his country, in all the diversities and inequalities of his fate, he held one image close to his heart—the pure image of Lilia.

Meantime, where was she ? " She knows his character, and yet she does not shun him—" words which were uttered in bitterness by Sholto, had, nevertheless, a deep and pungent meaning. Not that they applied wholly to the innocence of Lilia, but they impugned the conduct of elder and wiser women, who sanctioned by their countenance the introduction of such men as Lord Ravenspur and Mr. Aylmer into society, and were, therefore, responsible, in part, for the evils that occurred.

One day, to Lilia's surprise, she had received a stern summons from her father to return home. No delay was to be allowed, and Mrs. Topham was requested either to send one of her servants with her, or to engage some well-known and trusty person in —— to take charge of her home.

The little difficulties of the case were mooted one morning, Mr. Aylmer being present. Mrs. Topham never had any servants to spare, and the far famed char-woman was of too low a description. A great deal was said, in Lilia's absence, of the inconvenience which this request had put Mrs. Topham to. Why was not William sent to fetch her ? Why did not my

brother Howard come? It would be difficult to find such a person as Miss Howard required, of a staid age, and perfect respectability, until at last Mr. Aylmer, colouring a little, and stammering a little, said that there was a person in whom Lady Ravenspur placed a great confidence (the *lie* was solemnly and circumstantially recorded), who, he thought, might be induced to take charge of Miss Howard. He would see—he would try to prevail, and if he could not succeed, there would be no harm done.

"How kind!" And Mrs. Topham would be sure that her brother would approve of any one whom Lady Ravenspur countenanced.

Mr. Aylmer returned in two hours, bringing with him a middle-aged person, who could have answered, to all appearance, to those advertisements so often put forth by people of Utopian notions. "Wanted, a steady female, between thirty and forty, to take charge of a widower's family."

Mrs. Dabbs, for thus Mr. Aylmer announced her, was the personification of that oft-told, but seldom realised, vision of excellence. She was dressed in that unexceptionable black which denotes reputation, and is not mourning. Her cap frills sat round her face, as if tacked by a needle and thread to her calm brow. Her shawl was propriety itself; her bonnet had an extra poke to cover the downcast eyes, which beamed nothing but a saintly self-esteem when upraised. She evidently knew her place; and her language, as the Miss Tophams observed, "was considerably above the common."

Mrs. Topham was highly delighted, and only wished she could have just such a person to live and die with her.

"You lived with my Lady Ravenspur, good Mrs. Dabbs?" she asked, regarding her with great respect. "A charming woman, I have heard?"

"Oh, dear ma'am, an angel as treads the earth! There isn't her fellow in this mortal world!"

"So I'm told. And you were her confidential servant? And they are very happy together?"

"Oh Lard, ma'am, as 'appy as the day is long! He worships her—my lord does! and my lady's ready to lay down her life for my lord!"

"How charming! But I don't wonder," said Sophy, with a sigh, "for he's such a perfect being!"

"Just so, miss; and Mr. Haylmer's another sich. A very nice gentleman!"

"My Lady Ravenspur would not recollect me," said Mrs. Topham, charmed beyond measure by this interesting conversation, "for I was a girl—a growing girl—when I left Has-

kreton. But, if she should ever speak to you of Henrietta Howard, that was, say I begged my best respects to her ladyship. I remember—for her ladyship has always been such an honour to her station—her giving me a little present of a good book (I am sure I forget the name now), when I was just such a girl as these two young ladies, whose mother you wouldn't suppose me to be?"

"Oh, dear, no, ma'am! unpossible! their heldest sister at the very most," cried Mrs. Dabbs.

"Sit down, Mrs. Dabbs, and have a glass of wine. This is a very respectable person, indeed," whispered Mrs. Topham to her two girls. "Well, Mrs. Dabbs, you shall sleep here to-night, to be ready to set off in good time with my niece to-morrow. You'll be so good as to keep the glasses down on the side next her, for she's delicate, like her poor mother, who died early; and do not, for your life, or to please her, go by Nettleshed, where, I'm told, the waters are out."

Thus, carefully resigning her niece to Mrs. Dabbs's charge, and guarding against ideal dangers, and disregarding real ones, Mrs. Topham was prepared to meet Lilia on her return home, and to tell her that all was arranged for her journey. Lilia was, of course, surprised, but not reluctant; for the news that Bernard Elphinstone had gone away that morning had just reached her. She was astonished, almost indignant, at his having left without an effort to see her; and her dejection was apparent to her aunt and cousins.

"It is as *I* thought," observed Caroline, "that she likes Mr. Aylmer, and does not care to go away."

"It is as plain as possible," observed Sophy.

Mrs. Topham looked puzzled, and stopped short in some quilling. "At all events, let it be who it may, she ought to *go*," she muttered, as if her plans had been shaken by this new idea.

Soon after the early breakfast, on the following day, the post chaise was at the door, and Lilia, taking an affectionate leave of her friends, got in, followed by the irreproachable Mrs. Dabbs.

The first stage was made propitiously, and without any of those adventures then by no means uncommon in journeys. No highwaymen appeared on the moor; and since the whole of the journey was to be performed in daylight, was there any apprehension on the mind of either lady. When they stopped at the inn of a small roadside hamlet, dignified by the name of a posting-house, a dilemma occurred for which the travellers were unprepared—there were no horses. Lilia would fain have induced her companion to proceed with those they had, but she was assured that that could not be done.

Two hours were lost by this delay, but at noon they again set out. Totally ignorant of that part of the country, and but too glad to depart, it was not apparent to Lilia that her conveyance took a turn, and, diverging from the road, travelled into a wooded region, seemingly in the very heart of the country, and passed over roads evidently more fit for carts or two-wheeled carriages than for the dignity of the post-chaise.

They reached a vast extent of common land, and the sheep-bell tingled amid knolls of the heather, and a few stray cattle denoted the vicinity of some lone farm-house ; but no human being did they meet, till at length a loud halloo caused the postilion to halt.

"You are going the wrong away!" cried a voice, which Lilia recognised at once, and with a fear so transient, that the colour which it brought to her cheek faded ere yet the speaker accosted her.

He rode up to the carriage, and there was a look which, in after times, Lilia recalled with horror—a look like that of the hawk when it pounces upon its prey, intent, greedy of its victim, fell, foul ; yet Aylmer almost inwardly trembled as she spoke to him, and appealed to him, in her womanly fears, for protection.

"I am *so* glad you are here, for I really am alarmed?" she said, letting down the window : "we were detained two hours, and now, I am afraid, the driver has lost his way."

Aylmer averted his face, as he replied, "It was, indeed, a happy chance that I saw the chaise. You are safe now!" His voice sank to a whisper, but, in a moment afterwards, he rebuked the postilion, and desired him to turn into a road to the left as soon as he had crossed the common.

"How was it that you were in this direction?" asked Lilia.

Aylmer looked at two dogs behind him, and said, "The hope of sport. What time did you set out?"

Lilia told him the hour, and then turned to see the way which her treacherous postilion was, at last, conducting her.

The chaise now passed into a narrow and wooded lane, and long and wearisome did it seem to one who now began seriously to wish herself at home. It emerged on another common : a few cottages on the outskirts, a remote farm-house, were all that could be seen of human habitation. Slowly, and through a deep-sanded road, did the vehicle pass ; then, to Lilia's surprise, it fell into the track of a wood. She was screaming out her surprise and her fears in vain, when suddenly it came out upon an open space—a sort of platform of exquisite greenness

and nascent beauty, still as the deepest of nature's solitude. The windows of a house, seated in this seclusion, were tinged by the rays of the afternoon sun ; and, to Lilia's extreme surprise, here the carriage stopped.

"Forgive me," said Mr. Aylmer, now dismounting and approaching the carriage-door, "if I have led you a little out of your way. It was what, I conceive, will be no unpleasant surprise. Your friend, Miss Hope, is here. I thought her presence would plead my excuse for thus bringing you out of your way. This is the house of a mutual friend."

Lilia, however, hung back. "You should have told me, Mr. Aylmer—you should have left it to *me*, whether thus to delay my journey or not. My friends will be alarmed at my not arriving, as I shall now not do before nightfall."

"But will it not increase the delay if you now hesitate ?" asked Mr. Aylmer.

"Can I see Miss Hope directly, then ?" Lilia sprang out as she spoke, and charging the postilion on no account to drive away, or put up the horses, she went in—a slight misgiving at her heart, enough to make her hesitate for one brief moment, warning her, alas ! but in part of all the consequences of that unhappy day.

She passed through a narrow entrance, gay with forced and fragrant flowers, and was conducted by Mr. Aylmer into a drawing-room, exquisitely furnished, and commanding a view of the lawn. No one was there.

"Will you tell Miss Hope, quickly, that I am here ?" Lilia turned round to Mr. Aylmer as she spoke. There was a look on his face that she could never forget. He had closed the door behind him. He fell upon his knees.

"Mr. Aylmer, what folly, what insult is this ? Pray—pray tell Miss Hope that I am here, and let me be gone."

He grasped her hands ; they were still alone ; a profound silence reigned in the house ; the quick breathing of Lilia alone was heard. In an instant the trick struck her. She glanced at Aylmer for an instant, then rushed to the door. It was locked outside ; she shook it with her efforts ; they were vain, and she sank, affrighted beyond measure, but still retaining her presence of mind, on a chair.

At this moment, the character that was deemed so gentle, whose sweetness was construed by Lord Ravenspur into weakness, rose into dignity.

A moment or two was requisite to recover herself; and, whilst she struggled with her emotions, Aylmer poured out what he termed the professions of his love. He told her that a mad passion had induced him to bring her thus far—from

every aid—from every human being, in the hope of being able, at this advantage, to proffer her his faith, his hand.

No dishonourable intentions, he said, had ever had possession of his mind; he loved her truly, fondly, but despairingly; he sought an opportunity, alone, of making those sentiments known, and he besought her pardon.

Lilia listened confusedly: as he ended, she half turned towards him, but never deigned to look at him. "I do not comprehend you," she said, at last. "What! you wish to offer me your hand—*yours?*" She glanced at him with a look of contempt, beneath which Aylmer writhed.

"Well, then," she replied, "I refuse it—now and ever! There, sir, is your answer! Now, let me be free! allow me to go! and remember you shall answer for this insult; nor ever dare again to affront me by your presence. Mr. Aylmer, unbar the door!"

She arose as she spoke, and her dignity, the dignity of a modest, offended woman, struck the profligate man, who knelt before her as something extraordinary in its beauty and effect.

"It has not been a feeling of to-day," he said, apologetically; "but, from the moment that I saw you, that I heard you speak, I felt that no other woman could ever be dear to me. If I have erred, it is the error of the deepest, the truest affection."

"Do you mean," asked Lilia, her indignation superseding all fear, "to honour me by these professions? You! who are breaking every bond of society, violating truth, and insulting the defenceless? Once more, Mr. Aylmer, I reject, I *loathe* your proposals."

She had gone too far: she had touched that seat of pride in man's heart which, when once probed by woman, rankles, and is gnawed by the worm that never dies. Few men have the generosity to forget even a courteous refusal of their proffered love, and Mr. Aylmer was not the being to pardon a disdainful repulse, even from the beautiful and insulted Lilia. He arose from his knees calm, gentlemanlike, polite, but there was a withering sneer on his face as he said, "Am I, indeed, so lost, so contemptible, in Miss Howard's eyes? It is a misfortune; yet others may, like me, be misrepresented; and it may be said hereafter by the scandalous that even the scornful lady passed a night in Lord Ravenspur's house, where—but you know, I presume, his lordship's reputation?"

He turned coolly away. There was a deep silence of some moments. Mr. Aylmer looked round at Lilia; her eyes were fixed on the ground, her hands on her forehead, as if some new perception, some unexpected change, had befallen her.

She had, indeed, been struck for the moment by an idea novel to her innocence, and her thoughts ran to the dearest object of her wishes, and reputation, at that moment, was of higher price than it had ever before appeared.

At last she spoke. "The night ?" she said, and her lips quivered as she uttered the word ; she flew to the window—it was fastened down, and she looked in vain for her carriage.

"It is gone !" said Aylmer, answering her thoughts, "and far away by this time. There is not a creature within two miles of us here ; you saw the cottage on the moor—that is our nearest neighbour."

"Where is the maid ?" asked Lilia, quickly ; then, recollecting herself, and remembering who had brought that servant to her, she bent her head down upon her hands, and wept with vexation and fear.

Mr, Aylmer rejoiced to see her subdued. "You are in my power," he resumed, with a dash of triumph in his manner.

"Yes, yes," said Lilia, wiping her eyes, and in much simplicity, "but in God's also !" She raised her eyes for a moment ; that blind enthusiasm, as Mr. Aylmer thought it, appeared to him to give a consolation which he could not but consider as something very absurd.

Suddenly she turned towards him. "Mr. Aylmer, she said, quietly, you had, perhaps, sisters once—a mother ! Think if such an insult were offered to *them*, how you would brook it ! See in me a defenceless woman, therefore your sister, the object of every honest man's protection."

"But," rejoined Mr. Aylmer, with an air of deep respect, "I offer you no insult ; I merely seize the only opportunity that has ever been within my grasp of proffering my suit—my hand ; and that the world might not talk, that no malignant tongue might venture to whisper calumnies, I have a clergyman here who will perform those rites."

Lilia extended her hand to stop him. "I defy you !" she cried, "to force me ever to degrade myself to *that !*" A sudden panic seized her as she uttered the words, every nerve thrilled, and a tremor shook her frame. Still, like a child who dreads some stern operation, she would not sit down, but clung to the window-shutter.

Mr. Aylmer proffered his aid, but she waved him from her with a sudden transport, which died away in the agonies of fear and vexation.

"I have a brother," she exclaimed, reviving—"a father who will revenge this insult on their poor, poor Lilia !"

"And I am ready to meet them and their revenge," said Aylmer, calmly.

Lilia started, "Must I, then, endanger those dear to me?" she ejaculated, clasping her hands together. "Oh! Mr. Aylmer, pity me!"

"It is impossible; see, Miss Howard—if you will not permit me to call you by a dearer name—that night is already coming on; there are no means of conveying you hence, even (he added, in a low tone) if I were to abandon every hope of winning your consent."

"And will Lord Ravenspur consent to this base act?" asked Lilia. "Let me see him; he is my father's landlord; will he sanction so infamous a proceeding? Has *he* no honour either?"

"You flatter me," said Aylmer. "But let me," he added, in some confusion, "advise you not to appeal to his lordship's protection: you may not know, as I do, his notions upon such subjects. Meantime, to prove to you that my intentions are honourable, I promise you that you shall remain unmolested here, in this room, where I will send you refreshment, until morning, when you will, I trust, take into consideration my attachment."

"Pray do not again mention any thing that disgusts me so much," cried Lilia; "only assure me that I may be here, *safe* from you, from all who live in this house, and send some female attendant to me."

"I will; you shall be obeyed, upon my *honour!*" replied Mr. Aylmer, bowing low before her, and approaching the door. He lingered for some moments, however, hoping for some signs of that concession which he had met with so often from the weak, and those who had the misfortune to set their affections upon the fine gentlemen of those times—the daring, the remorseless profligates of the last century.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CONCEALMENT.

In a short time, wine and other refreshments were brought to the prisoner; these she refused, but requested by the bearer of them—an antique butler, old and wary in the ways of his master—to see Lord Ravenspur. She was told that his lordship had not then come home, and, indeed, some hours elapsed, and night waned on before he did, to appearance, return. An

interval of suspense allowed Lilia time for reflection. She gave up the idea of escape, for to what purpose? If she attempted it, she might be lost in the thick woods around this fair, retired spot, and the range of the distant country, and which was, she could dimly see, faintly glowing from the last rays of the departing sun, wholly unknown to her. She thought it best to appeal to Lord Ravenspur's protection, and trusted that those gentlemanly attributes which the world ascribed to him would serve in the stead of principle.

With a fluttering heart she heard his step in the passage, then the door was unlocked, and the peer entered. He came hastily in, saying, "My dear Miss Howard! you cannot be more surprised to be here than I am to see you here. What has Aylmer been about?"

"I felt certain," replied Lilia, eagerly, "that your lordship could not approve of this insult; and I appeal to your sense of right—to your friendship for my family—to set me free."

"Most assuredly: I am most eager to do so. I cannot at all comprehend Aylmer's conduct in this affair, I do assure you; it gives me a suspicion that his head is not right. Has that ever occurred to you?"

"He is an object of too great disgust to me ever to think about him at all," said Lilia.

"With regard to your leaving the lodge, how gladly would I aid it this moment! but it is now near midnight, and the attempt in this lone neighbourhood would be attended with absolute risk, greater than any you can fear here, where you are under the protection of gentlemen."

Lilia made no reply.

"I do confess," resumed Lord Ravenspur, "the danger seems to me ultimate, not proximate; what may be said by the world when your absence from home is known, when it is discovered that a young lady of so honourable a family, and remarkable for her decorum, is absent from her friends a whole night, it is not difficult to conceive some constructions may be put on her conduct, which—which I know but one mode of obviating."

"And what is that?" asked Lilia, who was moving restlessly about the room, as one whose spirits were excited beyond control. He paused, cast a crafty glance at Lilia—then proceeded—suddenly stopping short.

"Marriage." Lord Ravenspur uttered the word in a low tone; he uttered it in the full conviction of the timidity and weakness of his victim. "I do not see," he resumed, encouraged by the silence that ensued, "that Aylmer is a man whom any woman can dislike; he is well born, I may be permitted

to say; and since he has been guilty of this act of folly, which I attribute to a passion true as it is violent, I am willing to make an ample provision for him; suitable not to his own merits, but to the object of his choice. You seem—you seem surprised, madam."

"I am, my lord; it were enough, and perhaps too much, to ask me to *pardon* Mr. Aylmer, for, indeed, there are some things which a woman ought ever to resent; but to recommend to me as my partner in life, as the arbiter of my fate, the being to whom I must look up,—so lost and contemptible a creature, a man who has decoyed me by falsehood only to ensnare me still further, is an insult, even from you, my lord."

She burst into sobs of passion. Lord Ravenspur was again about to speak, but she checked him,—"Let me hear no more; I will listen no more; I will trust not even you. There must be some here who have hearts; perhaps the servants, lowly born, may have within them some of that true nobility which their lord has not."

Lord Ravenspur allowed the thrilling tones of her voice to cease before he said, "It is only as your friend, as your father's friend and landlord," he added, drawing up, "that I advise you. I shall do so no more. Then you determine to brave the world's opinion, to encounter the suspicion which must inevitably attach to you?"

"I can speak the *truth*," returned Lilia, looking at him with surprise.

"Without a witness to confirm it; for the woman whom Aylmer brought here with you will say or swear anything at *his* bidding. I am really cut to the soul, Miss Howard, that you should be placed in such a situation; but I advise you for the best."

"Perhaps you, my lord, can think so; I think *not*. I can fly from the world if it injures me; I can be at peace without society; but I should never fly from myself, were I to be tied to that—that Mr. Aylmer!"

She shuddered as she spoke.

"Then," said Lord Ravenspur, "to-morrow you shall be conveyed (of this I give you my assurance) to the nearest post-town. There are reasons why *I* cannot have the honour and happiness of restoring you to your friends," he added, with some hesitation, "but a *really* suitable female attendant shall accompany you." He bowed low as he ended, then waited for her thanks; but a loftier spirit was aroused than he had expected. He left her to her reflections.

These were confused, painful, humiliating. The excitement of present fear was at an end. The dread of the future, that

less definite, and yet, perhaps, more painful emotion, supervened.

All that dreary night she sat, wrapped in her travelling-cloak, gazing through the unshuttered windows upon the bright moon, which threw its light upon the lawn, and touched the face of the old sun-dial with its silvery splendour. At length fatigue prevailed, yet she sat upright in that chair as if rivetted by invisible bands to the spot. A slight slumber overtook her, so slight that, as if in her dreams, she heard bursts of laughter from some remote chamber of that fearful house. Then the room seemed peopled with figures. She awoke, cold, alarmed, and gazed out for comfort on the exquisite lawn and the peaceful prospect beyond.

The lawn, too, was peopled with visions, for two tall figures were planted opposite to the window observing her—as, startled by her movement, they withdrew, the countenances of Mr. Aylmer and Lord Ravenspur were disclosed to the affrighted girl. She shrank within the chamber, and remained panting, faint, cold, until the daybreak came to relieve her wretchedness.

How gloriously that dawning sun rose over the wooded glades! how richly its glow fell upon the hamlet, dimly seen afar off, and the close woods of the foreground! how fresh, how gay, were the spring flowers of the parterre, opening to its beams, as every early blossom drank in the dews of morning.

The blessing of light comes too often unthanked for; yet is it one of those daily miracles for which our orisons of praise should ever ascend to the Throne of Mercy.

It gave assurance, if not peace, to Lilia; and she began to arrange her dress, and to hope that the promised conveyance for her departure would soon arrive. It came, indeed, and with the announcement appeared a staid young woman, for the hated Mrs. Dabbs was no longer visible.

Lilia sprang up eagerly; but ere she quitted the room, Lord Ravenspur entered. He came to reiterate Mr. Aylmer's repentance, and to suggest that might it not be better, since the affair had been an act of imprudence and folly, for *her* sake, as well as for that of his relative, who was, he owned, inexcusable, to say nothing of the cause of her detention to her friends?

"Occurrences of this sort," he feelingly added, "however innocent one of the parties may be, are always misjudged by the world. Let me recommend you," he said, in conclusion, "since you have a long day before you, to stop at Hopewood and consult your friends there."

Thus he spoke, and as he led Lilia to the carriage, after persuading her, with much difficulty, to take some coffee, for she felt polluted by everything that she touched in that house,

he convinced her that he was not only wholly innocent of the plot to decoy her there, but indignant, alarmed, distressed at its future consequences. He placed her in the carriage, and bowing low, he stood on the steps until she had driven away.

His last words had sunk into her heart; as when she felt, too, that she was once more free, that the promise had been kept, she reasoned within herself, "what distress shall I not bring upon my family if I disclose this night of misery? What may I not avoid if it be concealed from them?" Besides, her heart throbbed when she thought of Bernard Elphinstone, and she wept bitterly, even as the carriage descended, and, taking a circuitous road through the woods, came into the high road. Lilia remembered, too, that no particular day had been fixed for her return, which had been left to Mrs. Topham's convenience and judgment. Young ladies did not write off a dozen dispatches by every day's post as they now do; a letter to families of small income was not always a welcome arrival; and the good old custom of writing by opportunities was in full force at Haskreton Manor.

Could she, then, without falsehood, pass over the event of the last twenty-four hours, and leave her friends in that state of mental repose they were then enjoying? How painfully her delicacy would be affected by the disclosure! how could she ever face society again! Alas!

Such were her reflections as she journeyed to Hopewood; and Lilia judged, as most very young persons tender to the nicest degree upon such points would have judged. Nor was she, perhaps, wholly wrong. Such is the state of social life, such the extreme delicacy of female reputation, that women had better in many cases conceal an insult than seek redress, since it is commonly supposed, and with much reason, that some detected weakness provokes the attack which is rarely directed to the strong.

At last, after a safe and rapid journey, the chaise for which Lilia had exchanged Lord Ravenspur's carriage stopped at Hopewood, and Lilia, trembling, got out. She felt unspeakably relieved when she heard that Mr. Hope was not at home, and entered the drawing-room with more composure than she could have hoped to assume.

Miss Hope welcomed her with an affection which drew tears from Lilia; for, in the sense of degradation, she was melted by the tenderness of her friend. She soon, however, found words to explain to Alice the reason of her visit—to relate simply and rapidly the incidents which had brought her there, and to ask her advice.

"What relieves me," observed Miss Hope, after listening

with some emotion and great indignation to the recital of Lilia, "is that Lord Ravenspur is not implicated. Erring as he is, I know him to have too strong a sense of honour for such an act. That odious Mr. Aylmer ! it is evident he leads his lordship wrong, and is not, as the world unjustly declares, led by Ravenspur."

The world, however, happened for once to be right, and Miss Hope wrong ; but this was only one instance of the mistakes which people, living in retirement and strong in their own opinion, make in character.

"Let me, however," pursued Miss Hope, "have the satisfaction of abusing Mrs. Topham—so careless, so reprehensible so unjustifiable !"

"But who," cried Lilia, "could have conceived such a thing ?"

"My dear, I value, in yonder casket, beyond everything that I possess, a jewel of my mother's. Do you think I would entrust it to hands that I knew not ? However, it is of no use being angry. The question is, to debate what is to be done."

The characteristics of youth and of middle-life might be plainly seen in the colloquy which ensued. Lilia, strong in innocence, and confiding in the justice of her friends, was, notwithstanding her previous misgivings, certain that, if she revealed everything, she should be believed and avenged ; her only fears were for her brother. Miss Hope, to use her own phrase, "threw William overboard at once," and thought only of Lilia. She was by no means certain of justice, but very sure of ill-nature being called forth from its dormant state in the hearts of the world in general by any incident of this sort. "Wherever two constructions may be put, you may rely upon it the most unfavourable is sure to prevail. What can be the use of disclosing this very foolish affair ? Mr. Aylmer will *never* tell it. Lord Ravenspur has begged of you to conceal it ; besides, dear Lilia, it might, I grieve to say, for the world is so censorious, be a barrier to your ever marrying."

Concealment was agreed upon ; and Lilia, consoled and reassured by her friend, set forward on her way homewards.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HALL, AND ITS MISTRESS.

MANY months passed away, and the world, to all appearance went well with the inhabitants of the hall and the manor-house of Haskreton. At the former, Lady Ravenspur had duly established herself, and all the benefits of a female superintendence were presumed to result from her residence in the family-seat of her husband.

Lady Ravenspur she undoubtedly was, though she still looked like Miss Purdillion. And she ruled over her new home as if she were still Miss Purdillion; no notions of extent, no ideas of liberality, could ever be engrafted on that small mind. She introduced the minutiæ of a cottage into the regulations of a palace. She had the pitiful economy that poisons all the sources of comfort—thinks of details, and leaves the great system of expenditure, a subject so worthy of high consideration, to be frittered away in squabbles about farthing-candles. The village of Haskreton fell, at first, unmurmuringly under her control; but the poor are admirable judges of character, and they soon discerned beneath the pretensions to bounty, the real niggardly selfishness of Lady Ravenspur. They received her tracts with smothered disdain, and partook of her thin soup unwillingly. The gentry around, struck by the decorum of her life, could not, however, refuse their tributes of cold respect. She was extolled, in contrast to her lord; and the world is fond of drawing parallels.

One being alone outwardly rebelled, and greeted with uncontrolled contempt the innovations of Lady Ravenspur—this was the lowly Isabel Tracey; whose meekness concealed a proud, sensitive, scornful nature, crushed in dependence, but concentrating its strength, like some medicinal agents, when trampled into atoms. For days, nay weeks, after the marriage of her cousin, Isabel had wandered like a pale ghost about the house, or had glided through the thick woods alone, unpitied, unsolaced by any voice of sympathy. That she *could* remain was matter of surprise to some who knew her history. Yet whither could the orphan go to hide her sorrows, or to sustain the reproaches of her own heart?

There was one spot in the tangled woods and glades around the house to which Isabel often directed her steps: it was a

green space appearing amid an underwood of laurels and rhododendrons; and in the centre was a deep, dark pool, garnished with the water-lily, and so overshadowed by the neighbouring trees, that it never reflected the bright hues of heaven; and here Isabel would stop in her walk, ponder for a while, and pass on.

Her presence dispensing, as it was allowed to do, with that of Miss Hartley, was a comfort to Lady Ravenspur. It gave an object for her small mind to work itself out upon. Isabel's faults were charming themes for self-gratulation on her own inward superiority, and for a magnanimous forgiveness. The "keeping-down" system was adopted, but all for poor "Isabel's good." Lady Ravenspur revelled in her new opportunities of benefiting a fellow-creature.

Where, meantime, was Lord Ravenspur? That was a question which few persons could answer. His visits to Haskreton were rare, and only occurred when he found it necessary to replenish his resources, either by cutting down timber, or by raising mortgages, or by the almost impossible process of extorting money from his wife; but, at length, after more than a year's absence, he again made his appearance at the hall.

He came like a blight upon the dreary but not desecrated region, which he claimed as his own. Propriety, scared from her seat, fled when he approached; Virtue recoiled, abashed, affronted; Decency hung her head. Yet he *was* so pleasant!

A ball was given at a neighbouring town. It was long since Lilia had consented to join in any of those diversions which she had once loved so well, but her reluctance to share them was overcome by persuasion, and she went to this ball with her friend.

The solemn minuet was over, and the goodly country-dance was begun, when Lilia, giving her hands to her partner, caught an eye fixed upon her. It was that of Mr. Aylmer. She became faint—the room seemed to dance round with her—and she begged to sit down. Her partner led her to a seat; but, as they retired, Mr. Aylmer advanced. He followed Lilia with evident solicitude, and was preparing to offer his inquiries and assistance. That renewed insult roused her. She turned towards him for an instant as he extended his hands. "Never!" she exclaimed, with a momentary effort, and moved onwards.

The dance went on. Mr. Aylmer remained standing in the middle of the room—drooping, abashed. This little incident was recalled at one of those epochs when every incident, minute or great, full of meaning or insignificant, is apt to be recalled.

From that evening Haskreton became to Lilia as a region haunted with fiends. Aylmer pursued her, frequented every path that she frequented, crossed before her in the sunshine, glided near her in the twilight. She loathed him, she dreaded, she no less hated his presence. Often terrified, she longed to throw herself on her brother's protection, and to entreat him to guard her from that base, unworthy man. But her secret had now been kept more than a year—none knew it? Would it be wise to revive it? To do away all the benefits, the security of that long silence? To make an open rupture in the neighbourhood? Could she ever sustain the publicity of such a course? No!

She hastened to Hopewood. There was now a bond between Lilia and her friend that seldom fails to enthral the weaker character; a secret upon which a strong and fixed opinion was formed by one of the parties.

Lilia had ridden over; she alighted from her horse, and found her friend alone.

"I wished much to see you," said Miss Hope, as she closed a letter which she was reading. "How are you? What have you been doing? How fares the world with you?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Hope, I am miserable! Mr. Aylmer is at Haskreton, and I assure you, in spite of all his former protestations, in spite of Lord Ravenspur's word of *honour*, I tremble at his being so near. How can I answer for that man's discretion, should he, in some of their detestable society, choose to brand me, or worse—should he ever dare to—to——" she hung blushingly over her friend as she spoke.

"——To resume his addresses?"

"I know not what course he might take," replied Lilia, emphatically; "but this I know, that he contrives to meet me *everywhere;* even at church, which he profanes by his presence, to fix his eyes upon me until I am ready to sink from fear and shame."

"What do you hear of his conduct?" asked Alice, gravely.

"I hear only of every bond of order being outraged, every social tie insulted by both these wicked men. All under their power (Lilia shuddered as she spoke) become degraded, polluted. There is not a village on the estate from which a cry of shame does not come up."

"Lord Ravenspur," said Miss Hope, in a tone of deep concern, "is, I fear, past all advice—past all hope. I can see him no more. He has lost all right to the consideration due to his rank; yet I knew him once the most generous—the most attaching"—she arose, and moved away as she spoke, the strong mind broke down, and the softness of the woman for

once prevailed over the firmness of the stoic. Alice wept for a moment, passionately.

Lilia stood by in mute surprise. "Was it then so? And had that noble heart, so capable of loving, been given to a being so lost as Lord Ravenspur?"

Her meditations were almost immediately interrupted by Alice, saying calmly, "I will trust him no more. Yet for Mr. Aylmer—you will think it strange when I say that I believe, could he be happy in the affections that he seeks to win, he might be a reclaimed, even a superior character."

"What do you mean?" cried Lilia, in some agitation.

"He loves you, evidently: and it has been the result of that mad passion that he strove to lure you, since he could not persuade you, into marriage. But it was love; a constant, an ardent affection. Others are not so faithful. I have received a letter to-day, Lilia, from a friend in London. You know, perhaps, that Mr. Elphinstone is there, gay, prosperous—expecting, it is reported, again to be in a condition to contest that which he calls his rights. Why do you grasp my hands so, dear Lilia? Why this transport of joy?" added Alice, sadly.

"Oh, my dear Miss Hope!"

"The evidence," resumed Alice, in a grave tone, "is said, by my *correspondent*," she laid an emphasis on the word, "to have been suborned, and that other documents may be one day found sufficient to authorize an appeal to the House of Lords. You are positively weeping with joy, Lilia."

"Can it be otherwise, when all our future hopes and joys are centred in that one hope?" asked Lilia, grasping her friend's hand.

"Yes, if men were *true*," replied Alice, emphatically. "But my friend's letter surmises, or rather states, that the noble friend who lent such aid formerly to the Elphinstones, has a daughter to whom Bernard, the elder brother, is said to be laying close siege. You will not believe this?"

"How—where?" cried Lilia, confused, and gasping for breath.

"In London. It may be mere report, which we shall have little opportunity of certifying or refuting; but I thought it *my* part not to leave you in ignorance of it. Am I right?"

"You are always right," replied Lilia, sadly; "and, perhaps, it is well for me no longer to cherish the only hope that has ever clung to my heart. I could not have thought, indeed, that an hour would have elapsed after Mr. Elphinstone had had a hope that his fate might be changed before he had told

me of that happy prospect—of those hopes in which I thought we were both so deeply concerned."

She spoke in deep dejection, and her eyes were filled with tears.

Alice, who had long in vain endeavoured to shake Lilia's faith in Bernard Elphinstone, was softened by her countenance.

"You shall know more," she said, kindly, "when *I* know more; and I will endeavour to gain more precise information upon the subject. Meantime, let me earnestly recommend you, dear Lilia, to view Mr. Aylmer's errors leniently—not to irritate him, to conceal your dislike to him, and to keep your own counsel. Has not that plan already answered?"

"No," replied Lilia, disconsolately; "it has *not* answered; I am conscious of a deception towards those who have a right to know my affairs; I tremble at a disclosure; I am no longer on the same footing as others; they may challenge inquiry into the past, *I* cannot. I wish I could again leave home—go anywhere; for the confidence of my family upbraids me; *his* presence nearly maddens me, and I am miserable!"

She flung herself on her friend's neck; Alice soothed and sustained her.

"You shall go, dearest Lilia; you shall leave home. Leave the management of that to me, and bear up, at the most, for a few weeks; then we will devise some plan for you. Shall I acquaint my brother with everything?"

"No, oh no! I could never bear to see Mr. Hope again, if he knew it."

"Your wishes shall be considered, dear Lilia; dry up your tears. I will tell my brother that you are here, so endeavour to be in a fit state to receive him."

She left Lilia alone: the windows overlooked the house at Hopewood, and Lilia gazed upon it with an emotion new to her, for in all her little difficulties the thoughts connected with *that* place had been her solace; now they were the source of her depression. Her countenance was so full of sorrow when Mr. Hope entered, that he started back for a moment, and looked at her in surprise.

"I thought that you would think Lilia looking ill," said Alice; "we must take her with us in our summer tour this year."

"We must, indeed," said Mr. Hope, kindly taking her hand between his. Lilia could scarcely speak her thanks, but hastily asking for her horse, she quitted the house.

Mr. Hope assisted in placing her on her steed.

"You see," he said, "pointing to Hopewood, "we are still desolate there. But times may mend, and if I mistake not

Bernard Elphinstone's heart, his first impulse will be to return to his old haunts and old friends."

Lilia inwardly blessed him for that speech. Could it be meant? Could Mr. Hope have penetrated into her feelings, and thus have answered and soothed them? She glanced at his countenance; it was a shade paler than usual, and more pensive. A softness, almost amounting to tenderness, was expressed in his deep and thoughtful eyes as he raised them to her.

When she reached home, Honora met her at the gate. The poor blind sister had had a sort of instinctive conviction that Lilia was not happy, that she was disappointed in some one of the main hopes of her existence; and yet she knew not how; and Lilia, unlike unwilling either to distress Honora, or to be distressed by her objections, had foreborne all mention of Bernard Elphinstone. In regard to Mr. Aylmer, Lilia would rather have died than have imparted to Honora intelligence which would have infuriated her fiery spirit, and set the whole family in a conflagration. The intemperate ask in vain for openness; we are forced to treat them as children whose passions are not to be aroused, and on whose discretion we have no reliance.

Lilia was, however, on this occasion, thrown off her guard. She was proceeding to her own room to take off her habit, when Honora stopped, saying,—

"You must come into the drawing-room first; Mr. Aylmer is here."

"Is he?" exclaimed Lilia, vehemently; "has he, then, the effrontery, the impertinence, to intrude himself here?"

Honora stood for a moment in silent surprise. "I felt sure," she said, "that there was something the matter, Lilia; you are concealing something from us, my dear sister; we are open to you on all points, whilst you are reserved to us."

"I cannot help it," exclaimed Lilia, withdrawing her trembling hand from the grasp of Honora; "indeed I cannot help it."

Honora followed her into her room. "Help what, Lilia? Lilia, be unreserved to me, your only sister, your best friend. We *were* sisters once," she added, passionately, "but of late you are estranged from me. To you it is of little moment; the world favours and flatters you, but cares little for me, or I for it. The blind, the deaf, the lame, may sit at home, whilst the gay and beautiful are courted and indulged."

Honora could not see her sister's face; could she have read that innocent and speaking countenance, she might have traced these sentiments,—"How much are you, my sister, to

be envied, safe from temptation, from blighted hopes, or from painful retrospections! Yes, the sorrows and joys of this world are dealt out with impartial justice, and greatly is the security of those who,—from any physical infirmity, are set apart from the snares and turmoils of life's eventful passage,—sometimes to be envied."

"Then you will not see Mr. Aylmer?" asked Honora, after waiting in vain for some communication from Lilia.

Lilia almost trembled as she said, "Not unless I am positively obliged; indeed not, even *then*."

In a vast entanglement of ideas betwixt Mr. Elphinstone and Mr. Aylmer, Honora descended to the drawing-room. Mr. Aylmer was alone there; he had been waiting for Honora. He coloured slightly, as she told him that her sister was fatigued with her ride, and could not see him. Mr. Aylmer took the hint; he bowed to Honora, and, begging permission to ring for his horse, left the house.

His reflections, as he rode away, comprised that confusion of despairing love, bitter resentment—a hope of revenge one moment, a softening regret another—which men of a certain stamp cannot control. He was entering, with a joyless air, the precincts of the house when Lord Ravenspur overtook him.

"I thought I saw you turn out of the manor-house, Aylmer? How were you received?"

"Not at all," replied Aylmer, sulkily; "no, if ever I had any chance, that unfortunate freak destroyed it—and for ever."

"Do not say so—rather the report that is now prevalent, that young Elphinstone is to be young Elphinstone again," said Lord Ravenspur, casting a shrewd glance at his friend.

Aylmer turned from his cousin, and, sinking into a moody state, galloped his horse over the smooth sward of the turf, as if to drive away reflections which he could not bear. Prompted to every evil by Lord Ravenspur, a gnawing jealousy took possession of his mind; he began to hate Elphinstone with the hatred of disappointment; and that is a burning, fiend-like hatred.

Lord Ravenspur entered his own hall: it was always with a heavy heart that he approached to the home of Lady Ravenspur, nor could any motive, except the most pressing interest, have induced him to sleep under the same roof with her. Since there had never, on either side, been love: their discords were polite, and less poignant than those which occur when wounded affections clash and cause the uproar; the contest was for individual rights; it related to settlements, deeds, establishments—those bones of contention! and pro-

vided that Lady Ravenspur had every just claim satisfied, and that Lord Ravenspur could occasionally avail himself of the interest of her well-tied up fortune, the affairs of the family might have gone on tolerably well.

Such, indeed, had been the case hitherto; but, of late, Lady Ravenspur had presumed to claim a share of her husband's regard—an item not in the settlements; she had the impertinence to throw out a hint or two about domestic happiness, upon which no contract had been made; she had even presumed to be jealous, or something like it—a contingency not provided for by the lawyers.

Watchful servants fancied that the object of her jealousy was the melancholy, and, as they would have it, misused Isabel, whose spirit my lady had, as they expressed it, "now fairly broken." Against Isabel were inuendos directed; upon Isabel were imposed all that could debase or affront; towards Isabel were indulged all those petulant humours, that petty tyranny, that unceasing and biting sarcasm which my lady's lady's-maid, no, nor the scullion herself, would not have borne. But Isabel had sustained it, after the first struggle, with a mule-like patience; for she had felt, perhaps, that the endurance of this barbarity expiated some wrongs. Conscience, if it did not make a coward of her, made, at all events, a martyr.

To do Lord Ravenspur justice, he sorrowed as much as his selfish nature could sorrow for the vexations of his cousin. Sometimes he interfered, but never obtained any remission of the sentence imposed. One day he was found hanging over Isabel's chair, and soothing her as she wept: that day her fate was sealed. Lady Ravenspur's form was drawn up to its full height as she unexpectedly stood before them, and represented, alas! too truly, the indignant and injured wife.

As Lord Ravenspur entered the drawing-room on the day in question, after parting from Aylmer, he beheld his wife, her face flushed, her person all ruffled; a storm was lowering, or had lowered. Lord Ravenspur stood meekly before the wind; he bowed, as was his wont, to his wife, then gazed around him to discover the source of the irritation.

Extended on a sofa, sobbing, not alone with grief, but with passion, lay Isabel; she gasped for breath, and, as her dress was thrown open, the emaciation of her throat and neck might be seen. Lord Ravenspur looked at her with compassion. If ever a gentle sentiment reigned in his heart, his unfortunate cousin inspired it; he pitied, for once, the victim whose peace he had blighted, and sorrowed over her ruin and disgrace.

As Lord Ravenspur stood, with a smile on his face intended

for his wife, with a glance of his eye directed to Isabel, Lady Ravenspur moved, with what was intended to be dignity, to the door. "I see," she said, tossing her head back, "*my* presence will not be required here. Miss Tracey's tears will be soon dried, in my absence, I have no doubt. An injured, calumniated woman!" she muttered, as she quitted the room.

Lord Ravenspur, who was growing timid in her presence, looked after her as she closed the door with somewhat more force than usual. Men, even of the lowest morals, have a notion of the privileges of a virtuous wife,—more especially of a rich one; and, whilst hating her with his whole heart, Lord Ravenspur had insensibly become afraid of Lady Ravenspur.

He drew near to Isabel with mingled compassion and vexation. "I am sorry," he said, hesitatingly, "that you are not happy, Isabel; that you and Lady Ravenspur do not agree together. Do you wish—have you an idea, that you should be happier anywhere else?"

Isabel sprang up, took the handkerchief from her eyes, and looked at him. "Where could I go?" she asked, in a tone of deep despair.

"You have *some* friends," replied Lord Ravenspur, in a faltering tone.

"*Some* friends! yes; and can I deceive them? Can I ask them to take into the house one whom, if they knew, they would spurn from their doors? Would that be the way to treat my friends? Few, indeed, are there, and they shall never be burdened with me."

"Then you must endeavour to live happily with Lady Ravenspur, Isabel."

"Happily! can the lamb live happily with the tiger?"

"You speak too strongly; you are irritated, Isabel." He took her hand.

"No!" she exclaimed, drawing it passionately from him, "that is over now! I will not degrade myself, nor her. That moment of weakness,"—she clasped her hands, and looked upwards,—"may God forgive it! while you—you"—— she sobbed, and buried her face in the cushion of the sofa.

Lord Ravenspur looked anxiously to the door; he thought he heard the rustle of a gown; he found he was mistaken, it was not so. He raised Isabel's hand to his lips, he kissed her brow, and entreated her to be calm, and to listen to him.

At this moment the door slowly opened—Lady Ravenspur had returned; she advanced a step or two, then fell back, and put her hands before her eyes.

A dead, drear silence of some moments followed.

"This," said the injured wife, "is the return for kindness —my kindness, unfortunate young woman, to you! And this, my lord, is your honour—your faith—of which, pardon me, you have vaunted so often!" She paused, her lips were pale with anger as she proceeded, "I have long suspected as much, and shall now know how to act."

"My dear Lady Ravenspur," exclaimed Lord Ravenspur, starting from his apparent reverie, in accents of the deepest humiliation; "Isabel, have we—has there ever been any thing between us, that could in the smallest degree hurt the feelings of Lady Ravenspur, if she knew it?"

He turned to his cousin as he spoke. She was silent.

"Isabel, at all events," he repeated, almost angrily, "you will justify *me?*"

Isabel still was silent. The blush of shame had now died away on her cheeks, and to it had succeeded the pale anguish of remorse. She raised her eyes to those of her cousin with a momentary glance, dark, reproachful, and sorrowful.

"I see," resumed Lady Ravenspur, "plainly enough, that I am the most injured of women."

She moved towards the door. As the rustling of her dress —that ominous sound—was heard in the room, Isabel sprang up, she folded her hands imploringly, her attitude spoke the deepest humility, all passion, all pride had vanished. She strove to speak, but the words died away unheard.

Lady Ravenspur looked back, and waited for a moment, with what was intended to be considerable dignity of deportment.

"Well!" said Lord Ravenspur, taking advantage of this moment of truce, and knowing that Isabel would not commit *him*, "what would you say, Isabel?"

But Isabel looked not at him as she spoke, her eyes were directed to Lady Ravenspur. "Would my absence ensure your happiness and *his?* Would there be peace if I left this —my home once—and never, never saw him or you again? Will you be kind to him? would you, could you treat him with generosity and forbearance if I were to go away?"

"Dou you suppose," said Lady Ravenspur, "that I could live under the same roof with *you?* A woman of my principles, of my condition, who must set an example?"

The pride of poor Isabel returned. "You," she said, disdainfully, "have only to forgive me this, that I have tried to perform the part in which you failed! I have tried to soothe, you to irritate him! I have endeavoured to reconcile him," she added, in a low, but bitter tone, "to the wretchedness of his lot!"

"Really," cried Lady Ravenspur, in a paroxysm of rage, "this is too great an insult! And you pretend, too, to assert your innocence?"

The head of Isabel was again bent low, and her figure almost crouched before that even of Lady Ravenspur, as she said, or rather whispered, "I never injured *you!* no—you gave me a home, and its purity has never been sullied by me since——."

"Never, in the remotest degree—at any time," interposed Lord Ravenspur eagerly.

"No," replied Isabel, raising her eyes to Lord Ravenspur, "I will not assent to a falsehood!" She paused, and again a deep silence ensued. She resumed, turning to Lady Ravenspur, "Now you know all, and I care not what becomes of *me!* For, indeed, what signifies it? I hope I am not long to be a burden on any one! I pray for death; and I believe that that is my only prayer," she added, bitterly, "that will be granted!"

"Isabel," said her cousin, taking advantage of Lady Ravenspur's stupefied and embarrassed air, "go to your own chamber. Lady Ravenspur, I will attend you to another room, and let me advise, for the honour of the family, for our own peace, that this affair may be buried in oblivion. I will comply entirely with your wishes," he added, after he had passed into the corridor, and when he thought himself beyond the hearing of the unfortunate Isabel.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESOURCE.

Among the crew of "spiritual-minded, sweet-spirited, faithful," men who visited Lady Ravenspur, and basked in all the luxuriance of tracts by her drawing-room fire, Mr. Pratt was the most frequent guest. He came into that very drawing-room looking as if he had lost his way, and found it in Lady Ravenspur's eyes: there was such a sweet surprise and confusion in seeing her, such a recognition of home, such a charming simplicity in the manner in which he sat down, bent that globe of a head forward, and cast his tintless eyes upon the floor.

Meaning he had in all this, but no one knew what; whether

he navigated towards a vacant living, or whether he plied his little bark so as to gain the haven of Lady Ravenspur's regard, or whether he sailed with a fair wind towards a legacy, none could distinctly tell ; but there was one who shrank when his dusty form came in, and who recoiled from his soft, fat hand ; who heard no music in those bland accents, nor detected any eloquence in those long and set quotations which Lady Ravenspur, whose mind was like a grammar, as dry and as stiff, found *so* instructive and *so* charming ! This disdainful personage was Isabel.

No looker-on could distinctly affirm whether, after all, the affections of the sad, proud Isabel were not the object of Mr. Pratt's small machinations. He was not the man to throw in the grape-shot of flattery, nor to carry an assault by a *coup de main*. His was the downcast, side-long glance ; the calm, unimpassioned voice ; the quiet, insidious attention which worked homœopathically upon the feelings.

Isabel had felt a disgust to the sanctified Mr. Pratt ever since, on the death-bed of the late Lord Ravenspur, he had been commended to her regard : that disgust gradually settled into hatred, for it seemed to her affrighted mind, that though she had repulsed the notion with vehemence, Mr. Pratt had not relinquished it. There was an unremitting, certain, though noiseless attention to "Miss Isabel," which insulted and annoyed her : there was, at times, a fixed look in his glassy eye which drove her from his presence. She had no reverence for his calling,—a long and early intimacy with her cousin, Lord Ravenspur, had destroyed *that ;* and the subservient or reckless character of the clergy of those days—shamelessly supine, or notoriously profligate as they were, in many instances, contributed to the contempt which affixed itself also to the holy themes inculcated by those appointed ministers of a neglected church. She hated, therefore, Mr. Pratt with a hatred that was vivified by his surplice and his gown, exasperated by his long, low graces muttered over the venison, and by the epithets applied by Lady Ravenspur to this "sweet-spirited man."

One morning, after a long interview between Lord Ravenspur and his wife, Mr. Pratt was seen creeping into her ladyship's dressing-room. The door was closed fast, a secret audience was obtained by the clergyman, and he was observed creeping out, his round cheeks a tint or two the redder than when he had entered. The thing was done—Isabel's fate was decided : but with hers that of another person was entangled, for few victims fall in this world singly.

It was a fine autumnal morning, and the hunt was to meet

at Haskreton that day. Early did Lord Ravenspur attire himself for a recreation to which he continued attached as long as his frame could endure the fatigue, and the excitement of which seemed absolutely necessary to his existence, when in the country. Since the day that Isabel had thrown herself on the mercy of Lady Ravenspur, she had never emerged from her own apartment, but had passed her dreary hours there in the deepest dejection. One aged person, her former nurse, was the only inmate of the house that had ventured to attend her. As Lord Ravenspur was going down stairs that day, this woman stopped him, and, curtseying low, and with many apologies, begged him to come to Miss Isabel.

Lord Ravenspur stood irresolute for an instant; then his wife's voice, that harsh, dissonant sound, quickened his footsteps: he hastened onwards, yet still he lingered in the hall. Had he a presentiment of that which happened? Scarcely was he supposed to have quitted the house, when Isabel was summoned to Lady Ravenspur's room. The high-spirited girl refused to go, and, crouching down by the fireside, she fixed her eyes upon the hearth, with an aspect of determined resistance.

In a few minutes, to the surprise of every one, Lady Ravenspur was seen going down the corridor to Isabel's room. She knocked—no answer; she opened the door, and stood before the drooping creature.

"Isabel," said Lady Ravenspur, in the sweetest tone she could adopt, "I am not come, my dear unfortunate young friend, to reprove you: no; I am only, I fear, of too lenient a disposition. It is my failing; and I am sure my heart bleeds for you."

She stopped short; but Isabel, confused or sullen, appeared not to listen to her.

"*We*," resumed Lady Ravenspur, with a strong emphasis on the word, "are really concerned about your welfare. I pass over what—what—the awkward circumstance you gave a hint of, with the charity of a Christian. It is for the future we hope, that the carnal-minded may be converted, and the sweet-spirited appointed minister of——"

Isabel turned her head quickly round.

"But I abstain," said Lady Ravenspur, interrupting herself, "from offering advice: to him, to the excellent Mr. Pratt, will I delegate the mission of mercy; he will lead you, Isabel, into the folds like a gentle shepherd." She took a handkerchief from her pocket, and wiped from her eyes what she called a Christian tear. Still Isabel was unmoved.

"To be brief. You cannot be insensible to the perfection

of that saint on earth who has long desired nothing so earnestly as your guidance into the path of peace. You must have seen Mr. Pratt's holy interest in you. *We* have seen it with pleasure; and we now," continued Lady Ravenspur, drawing up, have to apprise you that your hand is sought by Mr. Pratt in marriage: so desirous of your connection is he, that we make it a condition of any future notice to be taken of you by my lord and his family, that you accept it in the holy bond of a sweet matrimonial union."

Isabel turned her face towards Lady Ravenspur. A paleness almost like that of death overspread that face of suffering, already worn and wan; her lips quivered as she said,—

"'*We!*' Does Lord Ravenspur wish me to marry this man?"

"Yes; the proposition comes from him. It is a darling scheme of his," returned Lady Ravenspur, thinking a pious fraud at this moment allowable.

"He does! Let me hear it from his own lips."

"He is gone out," said Lady Ravenspur, meekly; "but he has authorized me to acquaint you with what he has done for Mr. Pratt. He will, if you accept him, give him the living of Maston-in-the-Moors which is vacant, and worth four hundred pounds per annum; a sweet seclusion, there being scarce a hundred souls to have the care of, those the most lost and depraved, being coal-miners; so that the penitent may there have the impenitent to recall to the paths of righteousness; and you, Isabel, will not be shocked or embarrassed by the society of your own sex or station." Lady Ravenspur paused, for there was something in Isabel's manner that surprised her.

"I must see Lord Ravenspur," she said, abruptly.

"I think I mentioned he was gone out," replied Lady Ravenspur, sharply. "But with such society as Mr. Pratt's, with the communion of such a mind!"—she clasped her hands in a sort of ecstasy,—"who could ever regret the gew-gaws of the world!"

"My lady," said the old woman, who now tapped at the door, "I have found my lord; he was not gone out; and if your ladyship permits he will come in."

Isabel half rose at this speech, and then, sitting down again, covered her face with her hands.

Lady Ravenspur hesitated. "Then," she said, sharply, "he must come in, I suppose: for, alas! a wife is the weaker vessel." And in a few minutes Lord Ravenspur stood by her side.

It is wonderful how circumstances alter the aspect of men. Lord Ravenspur, in his hunting attire, had, ordinarily, a peculiarly *débonnaire* appearance. The garb became him well: the black velvet cap, then generally worn, adorned with a gold tassel; the well-made scarlet coat and the nether garments even suited him; and he carried the whole off with inimitable grace. On this occasion, however, he looked dingy, degraded, ill-conditioned, as he stood meekly before his wife, and drew the point of his hunting-whip across his boots. Few men had a higher reputation for courage, in the world, than Lord Ravenspur, but he was a domestic coward.

Lady Ravenspur was the first to speak. It was delightful to see what charming matrimonial terms they were now on. "My dear," she said, looking fascinatingly at her lord, "I need only appeal as a matter of form, I know, to you on this occasion, for your heartfelt sentiments are well understood by me. Your opinion, my love, corresponds with mine, as it ever does: we have but one heart between us, I believe. Our wishes for your cousin are the same, are they not?"

Lord Ravenspur did not dare to look at Isabel, as he answered, in a hoarse, low voice, "Of course, my dear;"—the "my dear" fell quite to a whisper. It was extorted by a draft for several thousand pounds that morning.

"You see, then," said Lady Ravenspur, graciously, to Isabel——

Isabel was seated on a low stool; she turned her woe-begone face towards Lord Ravenspur as she said, "*You* really wish me to—to marry. *You* do?"

"I do, indeed," replied Lord Ravenspur, relieved by what he thought her calmness and submission, "for your happiness, my dear Isabel."

The well-known phrase brought the gushing tears to her eyes; but she dried them quickly. "There is no mistake, then," she said, tremulously. "And that is *really* your wish?"

She looked at him once more as she spoke; there was something ominous and solemn in the tone of those few last words. Lord Ravenspur was disturbed; he answered very quickly, and with more earnestness than before, "Indeed it is; for I think that——"

"You need not explain," rejoined Isabel, in a low, but composed tone. "I understand. Now leave me," she said, somewhat impatiently, "and to-morrow you shall have my—my answer."

"We will leave you," said Lady Ravenspur, moving towards the door. "In the evening, how happy should I be were you able to receive spiritual advice from one who——" She stopped

short, for the distant, absent manner of her to whom these words were addressed showed Lady Ravenspur that they were wasted in air. "My lord, be good enough to hand me down stairs." She waited to see her husband out of the room first. The door closed, and Isabel was left to her own reflections. "You will have a charming day's sport, my dear; and it will refresh you much, my love!"

"Yes, it is a fine day," replied Lord Ravenspur, looking up at Isabel's window.

"All is fine to the happy, innocent mind, conscious of doing good," said Lady Ravernspur, ecstatically.

Lord Ravenspur could have uttered an imprecation as he listened to her, but the thought of the last draft, and the forthcoming debts, did, as Macbeth says, cause the words to "stick in his throat;" he could not, however, say, "Amen!" but, wishing her good morning, rode off.

He was glad to get away, and almost hoped that he might never go back again; and a feeling between remorse and disgust, pity, hate, uncertainty, possessed his mind as he rode towards the place of rendezvous. The gentry assembled were waiting for his arrival, as owner of the hounds, to throw off; and the back-ground was filled up by farmers and yeomen, who, with homely courtesy, took off their hats to their noble landlord; whilst some, the more reputable and honourable portion of the country gentlemen, coldly bowed: they despised and dreaded the dissolute nobleman, but they could not refrain from hunting with his hounds.

Lord Ravenspur looked ill and absent; but he quickly entered into conversation with those around him, and disregarded the cool looks of others: it was now his plan. Some years ago, while a scrap of character remained, he could afford to be angry; *now*, such insults were, he wisely thought, beneath his notice.

It was late, very late in the afternoon, before the hunt was over, and the loud "halloo's" disturbed the silent woods in their repose. Then, shaking hands with some, Lord Ravenspur proposed to ride part of *their* way home with others. He took a circuitous road, reluctant, as it seemed to some, who afterwards recalled it, to go home that day. At a certain turn in the road he parted from his company, and turned up a lane, alone, towards Haskreton.

He was soon within his own territory—his own, and not his own, for every inch was mortgaged; and, perhaps, that reflection made him melancholy, for certainly he cast a mournful glance around him, and the bright and smiling landscape, tinted with the autumnal hues, had no charms for him.

Tired of riding—perhaps tired of everything, and willing to defer his entrance where Isabel was, or Lady Ravenspur was, as long as possible, Lord Ravenspur alighted at his keeper's house in the park, and, bidding him take his horse up to the stables, said that he should walk home through the grounds.

Many years have passed since the extensive pleasure-grounds of Haskreton have been visited by the author of these pages, but their melancholy beauty is still forcibly remembered. The broad grass-walks, merging into thick groves, or coming out upon glades studded with evergreens; the distant glimpses of a fair, not bold country; the change again to deep solitudes, are features, perhaps, common to many places of the same kind; but connected in the mind with ruin—guilt, they convey much more to the imaginative wanderer.

Lord Ravenspur, crossing the open park, entered the pleasure-grounds by a little gate; he sank at once into a pathway, which, from neglect, was then almost overshadowed with shrubs, and it was now that time of the evening when gloom begins. He struck the shrubs and branches aside with his hunting-whip as he went on, and proceeded towards the centre of the pleasure-grounds.

This walk was generally solitary; for rarely did any one of late, not even Isabel, come in that direction. The time was, and Lord Ravenspur recurred to it for an instant, when she had waited for him at that wicket-gate, or when her slight, girlish figure had been seen flitting through the glades, or interlacing the thickets, to welcome him home through his accustomed and favourite haunts; but that was all over.

As Lord Ravenspur proceeded, he was surprised to hear, at a distance certainly, voices in umbrageous seclusion—the voices of his own men-servants. He stopped short, and listened: he could not detect, at that moment, from what part of the dense woods the sounds came;—after a pause, his quick and practised ear discovered the spot whence they issued, and he walked on towards it. His route was circuitous: he was obliged, first, to ascend towards a bank, bounded by a belt of laurels, and then to descend into a sort of dell, whence the voices, now silenced, had issued. He came upon the deep, dark pool, almost overgrown with the water-lily, by which Isabel had often been known to stroll, and which now, in the advancing twilight, looked deeper and darker than ever.

There was a perfect silence here, although human voices had sounded so lately, and although there were persons standing around the pool. Something white was lying upon the bank, and the broad leaves of the waterlily on the water's face had been disturbed. Lord Ravenspur quickened his pace.

"It is of no use," were the first words that he heard—"no, she has been dead some hours."

He stood in the midst of the speakers—he stood and gazed upon the drenched, cold, silent form on the grass. No reproaches were expressed in that face now—no probing questions issued from those pale lips. Yet *was* she at rest? A convulsive pang had passed over her features in dying, and the look of unutterable agony was still there.

Lord Ravenspur kneeled down by the figure. He took the cold hand and said, "Oh God, this is death!" Then he sickened, and those around him would have borne him from that sad, still scene—from that tomb on earth; but he recovered from the faintness, and resisted, and abandoned himself to the most passionate sorrow over the form of poor Isabel.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SEPARATION.

Soon afterwards, Haskreton Hall was again closed. What did the neighbourhood say to all this?

One thing was certain: Lord and Lady Ravenspur were legally separated; and their mutual hatred, or incompatibility, which means the same thing, was avowed and next to published. A large portion of her ladyship's fortune had, owing to some legal informality in her marriage-deeds, fallen into Lord Ravenspur's power, and she had gone off with the honour of being a viscountess, and the comfort of being an injured woman upon a reduced income.

Lord Ravenspur's conduct was treated of differently, according to various views and tempers. The ladies took his part—the men, his wife's.

Lord Ravenspur fled from Haskreton, after his wife had left it, with the precipitancy of a man who dreads his own thoughts, and who hates the scene of some particular event. The servants could relate how that, for nights after the death of Isabel, he never went to bed at all, but sat up carousing with Mr. Aylmer, until morning stole upon them, and then he threw himself, half-inebriated, into an easy chair, and slept in his gay-laced suit; but he would never go upstairs, nor even be left alone; for superstition, the offspring of guilt and fear, held his mind enthralled in iron grasp.

It was long before that abode of the Ravenspurs was visited by many without a tremor. An old woman of iron nerves could alone be induced to remain in it: of these, the aged nurse of Isabel was one. Strange were the histories she gave out to her familiars, of the anguish and passion of Lord Ravenspur when he first encountered his lady—of their fierce and mutual reproaches; and she could relate, with sickening minuteness, every movement of that solemn *inquest*, which the guilty might truly fear, which sat upon the body of the deceased. Uncle Humphrey, who was one of the jury, could alone match her in particularity of details; but he forbore, and dealt only in inuendoes, in hints of knowing more, and wishing to know less than others did; but the aged woman was far more explicit. She told, in her simple Saxon phrase, how that her lady wished the poor body might be buried in the cross roads, as an example; and said that the verdict of the jury—accidental death—was bought; and true it was that too many of the jury were among the Haskreton tenantry, and, therefore, under an influence. And even Uncle Humphrey remarked that, when Lord Ravenspur, wishing to brave opinions, offered to show the coroner and jury the way to the room where Isabel lay, he staggered as he reached the door, and did not recover sufficiently to go in. Hence the crime imputed to Lord Ravenspur was magnified; guilt was his, certainly, of a deep dye, and Rumour lent it one still deeper.

There are periods when a general depression seems to take place in certain societies. Sometimes Death takes his scythe into a neighbourhood, and mows down all that one would wish left standing, sparing the tares; at other epochs, ruin appears almost epidemic; every one begins retrenching, as if well drilled to the work; Privation puts on her livery; disappointments, too, in love seem almost catching; and mankind to go wrong by a universal and secret consent.

"It is over—it is all over!" said Lilia, one day, as she rushed into Miss Hope's sitting-room; "everything is at an end between Mr. Elphinstone and me. I have brought you the letter, and I am come, my dear Miss Hope, to show you how well I can bear it."

"You surprise me," replied Alice, "that it was not over long ago, after his doubtful, I must say shuffling, conduct. I only wonder *you* should have allowed it to go on."

Lilia sat down, looked at the fire, but made no reply. There were moments when the hardness of Miss Hope's nature grated upon her gentle character, and this was one of them. Yet to whom could she turn for the inestimable relief of disclosure? Men may learn to suffer without sympathy, women rarely can.

"On what plea? *How* does he break it off?" asked Alice, after a pause.

"You shall hear his letter." Lilia opened an epistle she had that morning received, looked at it for an instant, in the vain attempt to read it: she checked the hot tears as they came into her eyes, for Miss Hope's presence was a kind of styptic to her bleeding heart, and placed the paper in her hand.

Miss Hope read it deliberately and critically. It was a clear explanation of the state of Bernard Elphinstone's mind. It told Lilia, coupling the information with a fervent assurance of continued affection, that there now remained no hope of his ever being in a condition to claim her hand; that his rank in society would never be restored to him; and that he felt it his duty to free her from any tie which would be only destructive to her happiness.

Something in the mode of expression, and in the handwriting, struck Miss Hope: she turned over the epistle and read it several times. "Are you sure? *I* am not sure," she said, thoughtfully, "that this is his handwriting; and yet, on second thoughts, it *is* his seal, also. Have you been in the habit of corresponding with Mr. Elphinstone, Lilia?"

"Oh no,—I have never even seen his handwriting," replied Lilia.

"And was it arranged that you were to hear from him?"

"No!—in short," said Lilia, blushing deeply, "no—nothing explicit took place between us. And yet I considered that Mr. Elphinstone could never—would never," she added, with a sigh, "forget what passed that day."

"This letter, coupling it with what I heard," said Alice, "has very much the appearance of a cold, heartless withdrawal. Let me beg of you, Lilia, to burn this letter, and, from its annihilation, to date that of an affection so ill requited." She paused for an instant, looked up in Lilia's face, and then seeing no negative in that troubled countenance, she committed the letter to the flames. "He has played a deep game," resumed Miss Hope, indignantly, "and I can now believe anything that is said of him."

"From whom—may I not ask it, dear Miss Hope?" said Lilia anxiously; "had you the information about Mr. Elphinstone? Was the authority good?"

"It was no less a person, Lilia, than his own brother." Miss Hope stopped short, for the intelligence seemed to have struck poor Lilia to the heart; she turned pale, and sank into the chair nearest to her. Miss Hope, strongly convinced of the fallacy of her hopes, and the fruitlessness of her attachment, was almost rejoiced to see that the blow *had* taken effect:

only she hoped—to cure. "The information was, moreover, unsolicited," she said, gently taking Lilia's hand within hers; "you must, therefore, give him up; you will be happier, freer, more at peace with yourself and others, when your mind is convinced."

"Yes," replied Lilia, sadly. "I believe so. There is no sorrow so severe as doubt, and a fixed and known unhappiness (her tears fell as she spoke) is easier to bear than that which I have borne of late."

"But why a fixed unhappiness?" asked Miss Hope; "you are surely, Lilia, too good and sensible to indulge in so romantic a sorrow: you will soon think differently."

Lilia shook her head. "It is not only that I am not very happy at home, and that, therefore, when all hopes of what would be congenial to my tastes and feelings are dashed, I must grieve; it is not the painful conviction that I have been deceived, or have deceived myself; but it is the hopelessness, the disgust to everything, the disappointment in the heart of another, the utter impossibility of ever being able to rest upon *any* thing in future, that seem to me to render life a desert. I have nothing to cling to—nothing to live for."

There was a pause of strong emotion, not only in Lilia, but in Miss Hope; and Lilia, when she became somewhat composed, was eager to depart. Nothing more was said upon this painful subject, and Lilia rode forth.

She directed her course to a ford just below the rectory, by which, crossing the river at some risk, she found herself close to the park. She rode onwards, passed through the old detached archway, and came near the house. There she alighted, and wandered for half an hour around and about that old tenement; silent were its precincts, and she took a long minute survey of all that she remembered but too well; and bade, as it were, on that day, a final farewell to all that related to Mr. Elphinstone.

It spared her much pain, she reflected, that she had been gradually brought to the convictions which she then entertained, and that no publicity had been given to her attachment. And as she rode away from Hopewood, she resolved to submit herself unmurmuringly to events; but as she drew near home, a panic at the prospect of the long, objectless, passionless days there to pass away, seized her—"the world without a sun;" the future cold and drear, without a hope; the present, insupportable; the past, not to be recalled; and she almost longed for some event, were it even a misfortune, to break the blank of existence.

That wish was not long in being realised.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

A GRIM inclosure in Gray's Inn answers to the name of South Square; its other merits being indefinite, accounts, I presume, for its situation being fixed upon as a fit epithet. South it may be, but the sun rarely visits it, and it has every attribute of gloom and dinginess that North Square, if such there be, could possibly manifest.

The inside of the houses, to do them justice, is somewhat more cheering than the exterior. In spite of the heart-sinking, knee-knocking, anguish sensation of forthcoming misery with which you ascend the inexpressibly dirty and revolting common stairs, the chambers are sometimes cheerful and warm enough: a scorching, untidy fire consoles the hour of waiting, or the long head-cracking parley; and a worn easy chair receives your quaking limbs.

In one of these same chambers, on the first floor, sat a young law-student, busily pouring over dusty tomes, not law books, but genealogical works. He was making out, with neat and curious penmanship, a pedigree; and the name of Elphinstone figured there in large letters. Still short, and now pale, and carelessly dressed, there sat, nevertheless, on the countenance of the young man an air of exultation as he came down towards the end of his immense sheet of vellum.

Two names remained only to be filled in, those of Bernard and of Sholto Elphinstone; and the student had just begun the B in the first name when *his* bell rang, and, having no servant, he stepped out on the landing-place to see who it could be.

A heavy, joyless step was coming up the stairs; and, in a few moments, the brothers, for so they were, met; and the elder was shortly enclosed within the den called, by courtesy, a chamber.

Bernard cast an inquiring glance around the room. "I wish I had been brought up to your profession, Sholto, for promotion is, in the time of peace, *so* slow in ours. You may sometime realise an independence. *I* shall ever be a poor hireling."

"I can read," answered Sholto, smiling, "the present cause of your discontent; but why need you have a profession? At

all events, it is but a thing of choice and of the hour. Very few years will see us righted."

"My dear Sholto," said Bernard, "it is madness to talk so. I can only hope that such visionary notions do not ensnare you from your professional studies. What have you here? Ah! our pedigree—can I still call it ours? It is better to leave the last two names unwritten, and to leave those who have possession, who have law on their side, to fill up the blank. But I don't mind it now. I wonder how I came to talk upon the subject; put that idle task aside, Sholto, if you love me."

Sholto obeyed him, for he idolised his brother; partly love, partly pride, composed his feelings, which were the only gentle ones he ever cherished. Already did his character partake of the worst features of his chosen profession. Naturally incredulous, he was now suspicious; he looked upon it as a point of duty to trust no man, and to believe that every one had his price. Those hateful sentiments, often advanced with a smile that was far more withering than a frown, had become part of his nature. With all this, he was very courteous, very obliging, very acute, well-informed, and sensible, and was rather a favourite with society in general.

Bernard, on the other hand, was somewhat altered since his misfortunes. The high standard which he had upraised for himself and others had become a severe rule and guide. The nice sense of honour, which had been so cruelly wounded, was now carried to the extent of punctilio: to this *his* profession contributed. Although he had proudly withdrawn from the society of his brother officers, from the painful conviction that his birth was a matter of conjecture and discussion among them, he was susceptible as to any affront, and loftily scrupulous in making no advances to others; and gradually, from the early shock to his hopes, the advantages of a fixed and honourable position in life became over-estimated in his mind, and a yearning desire to raise his name, should he ever *have* a name, to see his house restored to honour, grew into gnawing disease, rather than into an inciting and salutary purpose.

The brothers talked dejectedly over the chamber-fire that morning. Bernard had come up on leave to see Sholto; but he had entered into little society, and the desolateness of London to those unknowing and unkown, formed one of the themes of their conversation. Yet, as Sholto remarked, that his brother *was* unknown was his own fault, for many would be happy to entertain the *acknowledged* son of Lady Janet Elphinstone;

from curiosity," added Sholto, "and the love of pretending to know all about our cause, if for nothing else."

"Or from kindness," observed Bernard, with a dash of bitterness in his tone. "I wish I were among the good people at Hopewood."

Sholto was silent for an instant. "I have reason to know, that is, to suspect, that they are like the world—prejudiced against us."

"I should be very slow to believe it," said Bernard, checking a sigh, and speaking in such a tone as to close the conversation, for his manners were now stern ; and habits of abstraction had grown upon him. "Mr. Hope is such an excellent man," he resumed, however, after a pause.

"He is reputed so," said Sholto ; "he is, I have no doubt," he added, conceitedly, "well meaning, but weak ; led by his sister—and *she* leads others."

Bernard looked at his brother, but instantly afterwards drew up somewhat loftily, for he considered that, if Sholto meant to hint at any one in whom he was interested, he was taking a liberty—a trait of his captious and now exacting temper.

"I can but remember," he observed proudly, "Mr. Hope's liberality and gentlemanly conduct to me touching Hopewood ; and if kindness and generosity be weakness, he *is* weak—but not otherwise."

"But don't you see it was for his own advantage," rejoined Sholto. "You gave him up Hopewood, to be sure, with a year's rent unpaid ; but then, had he not treated you civilly, he might have had a great deal of trouble and expense in ejecting you ; besides, he knows the time will come when——"

"Never !" interrupted Bernard, "never ! Let me not hear such visionary hopes on the one hand, nor such idle suspicions on the other. A man who seeks to lower a good action by imputing far-fetched motives, when higher and holier ones can be given, derogates, in *my* opinion, from his own character as a gentleman."

"We lawyers think differently," replied Sholto, meekly, yet somewhat sarcastically.

Bernard rose to depart. "We meet to-morrow," he said, pressing Sholto's hand, "at Colonel Sinclair's. I must now go to the Horse Guards to receive my orders."

He ran down stairs, suppressing as well as he could a slight emotion of resentment towards his brother. Such were his sentiments then ; but gradually the distrustful and the cynical affect the open and the guileless with that most incurable of all mental diseases, distrust. Sholto was clever and patient ;

his intellect was sharpened by perpetual labour, whilst that of Bernard was, as it were, sent out to grass. The abler capacity is certain, in time, to gain an influence in which its own strength grows, whilst the oppressed judgment of the inferior party languishes and deteriorates. In shrewdness, Sholto was, it is true, his brother's superior; but the real extent and quality of Bernard's mind far exceeded those of his brother. And yet that noble and great character was swayed by one narrow in its views, and unsound in principles.

Ere yet he reached the distracting throng of Holborn, compassion, affection, even self-reproach, had superseded that transient displeasure. "Poor boy!" said Bernard to himself, "he has had few advantages; and now, cooped up in those chambers, seeing few persons, and those of cramped though hardly wrought intellects, how is it possible that his should expand? Before him is a life of labour and of privation. Poor Sholto! how different it ought to have been!"

Thus reflecting, melancholy, and almost tempted to run back, and to say something kind to his brother, yet the pride of his nature not permitting him to do so, Bernard found himself at the end of Holborn before he had quite settled which way he meant to go. A little crowd gathered around a caricature shop obstructed his progress. At the skirt of this stood an elderly gentleman, with an umbrella stuck under his arm; he was laughing so heartily at something that he saw in the window, that Bernard's attention was called to him. The gentleman turned round, and the face of Mr. Humphrey Howard met his view, just the same in London as in the country;—his black spencer over a dark green coat, his grey tights and gaiters, his broad-brimmed hat, and huge cravat of the whitest jaconet, his shirt-frill a quarter of a yard in breadth, and his hooked nose, were just the same.

Bernard knew him but slightly; but there is something in a familiar face from a place which you have left for ever that has almost a sacred interest. The gentlemen faced each other, and shook hands.

"Good day—good day to you," said Uncle Humphrey; "you are surprised to see me here—my third visit only to this place—what a Babel it is! I was here in '48—then in '50—then in the month of July, 1753; and now—which way do you walk? So you've quite left our county? Do you lodge hereabouts?"

"No," replied Bernard, quickly; "I am in Clarges Street."

"Oh! I'm so glad to hear it—a very good street—very comfortable there—hem! I was afraid—that circumstances—all well—very good—Clarges Street—*we* are in Craven Street,

where my brother has been in the habit of coming up for years, so he liked, poor man, to be in the same place; and 'tis little matter where he is. So you've quite left our county, have you? And you've probably not heard of—of——"

"No—what? Nothing afflicting has happened, I hope, to any of Mr. Howard's family?" said Bernard, with much feeling.

"Ah! Mr. Elphinstone, I could have told you years ago that things were going wrong; I looked on, but said nothing. It was not my place, you know, to interfere: but I looked on, and just kept my opinions to myself. Why, bless your soul, sir! my brother was losing three hundred a year by his farm at yon manor-house. I could see everything was going to rack and ruin as fast as it could."

"But his family?" asked Bernard, with a quivering lip.

"They know everything now, poor dears, and that's a satisfaction. I assure you, I had no rest till I made them perfectly sensible that they were ruined, or next to it. They've borne up uncommon well—Lilia in particular; her sperritt has risen mightily; she has raised herself wonderfully by it; but they're all beggars, sir, or next to it—for they can't look to me."

Bernard could have said, "Why not? you are reputed rich;" but proud for those in whom he felt an interest, as well as for himself, he was silent.

"Poor, poor Lilia!" thought Bernard: and the pang felt for her was aggravated by the reflection that he could offer her no aid, had no home to give her, and that even his sympathy was but adding to her sorrows.

The old bachelor turned the corner of South Molton Street, for he always chose sinister ways and dirty paths in his walks as well as in his figurative journey through life, and began to wend his way towards the Strand. He looked back, and could not forbear admiring the fine, soldierly gait of him from whom he had just parted, when suddenly Bernard turned round, retraced his steps, and came up to him.

"May I call on Mr. Howard?" he said, grasping Uncle Humphrey's hand, whilst his face glowed.

"Oh, assuredly; bless your soul, sir, *they* don't take anything in ill part; *they* don't think anything unkind of you. I'll step down and prepare them to see you to-morrow."

"To-day—this afternoon—if I may," replied Bernard, eagerly.

"Well, sir, supposing my brother's not worse, though he's uncommon difficult to manage; and don't be surprised if you're refused at the door."

Uncle Humphrey went *his* way, and Bernard went *his;* the one to dingy lodgings in Clarges-street, the other to dingier

lodgings in Craven-street ; for there is no city in the world so famous, or so infamous, for dirty, miserable lodgings, let at an exorbitant price, than London. But dingy or dear, the "apartments for single gentlemen" in Clarges-street looked bright and comfortable in the eyes of the young soldier that day. He had regained an interest in his solitary existence. The desolate city was no longer desolate to him ; his heart had one resting-place in it—*one* source of happiness amid the crowds that interest not ; and, perhaps, that one is enough.

He revised his attire, looked anxiously in the long-neglected looking glass—the disregard of which often shows a pre-occupied, oftener a depressed mind—and set out on his walk to Craven-street.

It was singular that he had been walking to that very street many times of late, and, to explain this, I must recur to some early passages of Bernard Elphinstone's history.

It has already been stated that he had been rescued from destitution by an excellent old lady—the Lady Margaret Stewart—who took him to her home after the death of his mother. Lady Margaret had now been dead some years, but her niece, Miss Stewart, was still living

She was a dependent relative, educated also by the bounty of Lady Margaret, and was some few years older than Bernard. She was an invalid. To what degree her physical maladies were to be imputed to her mental ones, remains yet to be told. After the death of Lady Margaret, a small annuity preserved her from want, and when Mr. Elphinstone was rich, or believed he was rich, every comfort that an invalid could require was secured to her.

As Mr. Elphinstone knocked at the door of the lodging to which he had been directed, he remembered that he had often, of late, knocked at that same door, had gone in, and mounted the stairs, high up, to Miss Stewart's room, *au troisieme*. It appeared to him singularly unfortunate that he should not have known that the Howards were in that very house, occupying, probably, the drawing-room floor, whilst Miss Stewart enjoyed a far more extensive river view above them. He changed his opinion, however, in a few minutes, when the servant who opened the door said, in reply to his inquiries, that Mr. Howard was too ill to receive visitors, and that the Miss Howards declined all company. At the same time he put a note, with an air of much mystery, into the hands of Bernard, and then closed the door. The chagrined lover stood for a few minutes on the steps to read it. The hand was not well known to him, for it was the first time that those who were so fondly attached had ever addressed themselves to each

other in writing ; but the words of that brief epistle soon cast a chill over his heart.

They told him that, being apprised that he had intended to pay them a visit, she entreated him to spare her that pain. "After all that has occurred," they went on, "an interview would only be distressing to her—embarrassing to him. And we are too poor and too unhappy"—such were the expressions —"to encounter any fresh vexation." At first, Bernard was transfixed with grief and passion ; then his mind reverted to the scenes at ——, and a conviction that he had been forgotten settled in his mind. His pride and temper rose high, he remembered that Lilia was poor, and his heart softened towards her.

He reperused her letter. It was not kind, but it was not unkind ; and he began to take a more lenient view of the subject. Lilia's prohibition might be the result of a mournful and too well-grounded opinion that, in the present ruinous state of her father's affairs, in the complicated uncertainties of his own, it were wise to kill hope in the bud, and to avoid interviews, and a consequent renewal of an attachment apparently madly imprudent.

Bernard's step was quickened as these emotions passed through his mind, and the tear—a sign of sorrow very unusual to him—the tear of wounded feeling, dimmed his eye, as he walked on and reached Clarges-street. Then how dull, and dim, and cheerless, looked the room which an hour since he had deemed so comfortable ! How lonely was the hearth which he had thought to people with bright visions and tender remembrances ! His pride—that feature of his character which had lain dormant in prosperity—gave force to the sting of his peremptory dismissal from Lilia.

"I am to bear insults every way," he exclaimed aloud, stirring the fire with fury, and ringing the bell with a corresponding gesture. "Am I to have no light to-night ?" he asked, as the servant entered, in a tone which electrified the damsel who waited on him, and to whom he generally displayed the consideration due from a gentleman to the lowly as well as to the rich.

The girl, after a lingering stare, brought the candles in silence, and Bernard sat down to write. He wrote a short, gentlemanly, cold reply, assuring Miss Lilia Howard (the mild form of falsehood being permitted to the code of honour of a rejected and irritated man) that, in seeking the honour of calling on Mr. Howard and family, his object was to mark a general testimony of respect, and not to urge *any* attentions which were likely to prove obnoxious to *any* individual of that

family. We talk of a pen being dipped in gall; but I should say that the letters of Elphinstone's billet were stamped in ice, they were so lofty, so chilling, so withering in their coldness.

He scarcely re-read the letter, but hastened with it into the street, and sped through the throng with a hurry that sometimes retarded his progress. He gained Craven-street just as the unfortunate family within were sitting down to tea, gave in the note to the servant, and hastened home again.

The domestic who took the note upstairs found the family at tea; Mr. Howard seated in a large leather chair near the fire, with the newspaper on his knees; Honora near the tea-table, at which Lilia presided; a beautiful Irish grey-hound, called Wolf, slept on the rug, the sole relic of Haskreton and the manor. Mrs. Howard was not one of the domestic circle.

Lilia had been looking anxiously round at the door every moment; the servant had had his instructions—he was not to give in any note that might come for her, but to say that she was wanted, and she was to receive it in private.

She grasped it in her hand, and, with a strange feeling of mingled fear and expectation, took it into her own room. After a few moments of solitary perusal and reflection, she returned calm, and even cheerful, into the drawing-room, for Lilia had now a new incentive to self-restraint. Her character was already strengthened and purified by the growing difficulties of that season of adversity. A fresh motive had arisen in the dangerous illness of her father. She looked pale, indeed, but there was no one to observe her; her father never troubled himself with those nice shades of tint, or variations of countenance which some parents instinctively observe; and Honora could not see them.

Happily Honora could not observe, either, the change in her father's aspect. All trace of vigour was gone. Mr. Howard had sunk suddenly into the old man. His features were sharp, his complexion livid, his voice hoarse, his temper subdued; that was, perhaps, the worst sign, the most certain indication of conscious weakness. And his indifference to the state of his affairs was also a symptom of increasing maladies, which absorbed every thought, fixing the sole attention upon the physical condition.

That night Lilia longed for the hour of bed-time: it came at last; the numerous hits of backgammon were over. Her father was assisted to his room, Honora to hers, and Lilia retired to her small chamber by the side of her father's. Then she re-perused her letter. She endeavoured to reconcile herself to its cutting and cold contents; she endeavoured to think it for the best that she now knew perfectly that heart which

she had so over-prized; she tried to convince herself that she had escaped from misery, when all hopes of an union were over; but such philosophy would not do.

It was a calm, soft evening, and Lilia, to cool the flushed cheek and throbbing brow, threw open her window, and looked out upon the river. Its shores were studded with those innumerable lights which reveal the notion of a vast city and a dense population, but its waters were still and noiseless. As Lilia indulged her reverie, the sound of soft music in the room above her drew her attention, for an instant, from herself. She had often heard that sound, and oftenest at this late hour of the evening. They proceeded, as she knew, from the chamber of the invalid who lived overhead, and about whom Honora had indulged some curiosity. Dolly, the old housemaid who came with the Howards from the country, had contracted a friendship with the polite lady who attended upon Miss Stewart, for that was the name of the invalid. All that had been gleaned was, that the invalid was "odd," neither old nor young, rich nor poor, generally kept her bed till a late hour of the day, and had the inconvenient habit of sitting up half the night.

Only one visitor had she, and that was a gentleman, whose name was kept a secret, because Miss Stewart did not like it "talked about;" which seemed to imply that there "*was* something in it," as Dolly observed, when she attended on Miss Honora.

The only indulgence that Miss Stewart allowed herself was a small piano, on which it was generally her pleasure to play when every one wished to sleep. Sometimes the instrument disturbed Mr. Howard, and then a polite message was sent up-stairs, begging that Miss Stewart would be so kind as to remove the piano: an equally polite one was returned, assuring the ladies that it should be done; and this was all the intercourse that had passed between the parties.

On the following day, a change took place which tended to bring this very slight acquaintance to a crisis. Mr. Howard became worse, and was confined to his bedroom; and Lilia, aroused from her own secret sorrows, took her post by the many-paned, high window, which looked over a back court, with a sideway glimpse of the river. Miss Stewart's rooms were contiguous to this apartment, and fronted the street; they consisted, according to Dolly's statements, of a well-furnished sitting-room and a commodious bedroom, in which was a smaller bed for the maid.

A few days of intense anxiety followed the long weeks of slow and consuming vexation which had preceded. An inflam-

matory attack changed the features of Mr. Howard's disease. Mrs. Howard was summoned; she had been visiting Lady Ravenspur. She appeared one day, spruce and fresh, as if she came from a wedding-breakfast, and was proceeding to a visit of ceremony. Her first remark to Honora—"Bless me! what is to become of you all? I am sure you are not to look to *my* little means"—set on fire the fuel which long intestine discord had prepared.

"'Tis very wrong," she added, "in Mr. Howard to neglect his health so, and to forget his wife and family as he has done. Could I prevent his taking bottled cider last Christmas? No; it was impossible. No one can blame me. I always spoke up for his brandy-and-water, lukewarm, which couldn't do an angel harm."

"You have, indeed, madam, nothing to blame yourself for," rejoined Honora; "my father seldom referred to your opinion."

"Very true; however, it is fit now that I should know the state of affairs. I have sent for Lilia to come down to me, seeing that your poor father may be overcome when he sees me."

"I don't think it will affect him either one way or the other," said Honora, sulkily.

"Ah, here is Lilia!" and at this moment Lilia entered. She came in with that confused and harassed look which bespeaks a thousand anxieties *not* in the present scene; and she would not sit down, merely saying, "I cannot stay—cannot leave for above a minute or two. What, madam, are your commands?"

"But my father is not worse?" cried Honora.

Lilia turned from her. Honora's affections were, she well knew, as strong as her resentments. She dreaded lest that high and ever-unsubdued spirit should be unable to submit.

"You must prepare her," she whispered, in a very low tone, to Mrs. Howard. "You must lay before her all the uncertainties and difficulties."

"I!" said Mrs. Howard, "I dare not say a word to her; and, of course, I presume my feelings are to be considered as much as Miss Honoria's. I suppose you have sent for his son? I suppose everything will not be left upon me to settle?"

"Is William sent for?" exclaimed Honora. "Is there really a necessity for *that!*" She arose as she spoke. The dark hue of her countenance yielded to a deadly pale. She extended her hands to feel her way, but was glad, in a house

comparatively strange to her, to accept the aid of poor Lilia. Thus Honora reached the apartment where Mr. Howard lay, dangerously, mortally ill.

His strength was now so subdued, that it was only at long intervals, and in a fainter degree, that his habitual expressions were heard, provoked by some trifle; whilst the great cares which haunt the pillow of the dying, the hopes and fears of eternity, the human pangs for those left to buffet with their fate, concerned him far less than the taking a dose of medicine, or being denied a favourite dish. Even Honora, as she stood beside his bed, drew forth only the exclamation, "There now; that's a good girl; sit down; you're so tall, you shade the light from me." And down she planted herself, nor could any persuasions move her from that spot, with few remissions of rest and refreshment, until the restless sufferer was at peace.

One night Mr. Howard's sufferings became intensely acute. His impatient temper was unequal to the trial. He groaned audibly; no relief was obtained by the usual remedies, Honora, helpless, stood by, the pale image of despair. William supported his father. Lilia flew down stairs to seek a servant who could run for the nearest medical aid. As she rushed across the landing-place, she was startled by a figure in the darkest corner moving a little. She uttered a little exclamation of surprise, and then, carried on by the stronger impulse, pursued her way. She could find no servant to aid her, and, instantly covering her head with a shawl she wore about her shoulders, she ran across the street, having gained the aid she wanted, and returned with an apothecary. She went up stairs after the good man. This time she remembered the landing-place, and held up her candle to look into that dark corner, but no one was there.

That night, after agonies which too well denote the passage through the "valley of the shadow of death," Mr. Howard breathed his last.

His children never knew, until they saw him feeble, prostrate, and subdued, how much they had loved him. Then their murmurs rose in self-reproach to think that they had valued him so little. As the spirit softly departed from the worn and agonised frame, the light of day broke in upon the assembled group. William, supporting on his shoulder the head of his father; Honora, still, pale, tearless, listening for the fine changes which mark the gasp of suffering, and the last breathing of exhaustion; Lilia, on her knees. When all was over, and no pulse responded to the pressure of the medical man, who had watched the invalid during the night,

William looked at his sisters. He spoke not; but that look seemed to say, "Lean on me, you helpless ones, for protection and support." They took a solemn farewell of their parent; then Lilia led Honora to her room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER CONSIDERATIONS.

Mrs. Howard had wisely abstained from encountering these scenes, but sat, with the widow by anticipation stamped on her face, and in genteel woe, in the palour below. She had matured her plans for the future before even Mr. Howard, kindly deceasing, had wholly settled the question of "to be or not to be."

After, however, the funeral was over, and the will read—a will which bequeathed nothing but trouble and responsibility to its administrators, Mrs. Howard announced her intention of visiting her friends, and begged that, in any arrangements they should make, they would not regard *her;* "for I feel myself wholly unequal to such a charge as I have had, and to the management of another person's family."

"True," said Honora, sententiously.

"I should be very sorry to put any constraint upon your inclinations, madam," observed William; "I hope my sisters will find a protection and a comfort in me:" he checked a starting tear as he took a hand of each in his.

"They will live with you, in course," replied Mrs. Howard, "unless you change your condition, I suppose? Lilia, please remember to put aside all the linen marked with a small 'E' and a great 'T,' till I come to the manor; when my spirits will allow me, I shall go there, to sort out everything."

"Let all your property be sent to you at once, if you please madam;" cried Honora, whose spirit was rising.

Lilia checked her sister, but with difficulty, for even the scrap of Fortune's goods which poor Mr. Howard had been able to leave to his widow and children, small as they were, were sufficient to raise a flame in selfish hearts, and to produce as much ill-blood as if they had amounted to millions of treasure.

Mr. Howard had, however, done, as he thought, justly by all parties. To his wife, whom, as his wife, he respected, whom, as a woman and a companion, he rather disliked, he had left an

annuity, to be paid out of the manor-house estate, which satisfied her not, but which much hampered his impoverished successor. To his son he left his debts and difficulties; to his daughters, small portions, for which there were no assets. His widow, therefore, had to the full the privileges of her state.

After a due season of decorum, which was a month, but seemed a year to Honora and Lilia, Mrs. Howard set off in a post-chaise to visit her friend, Lady Ravenspur, who had obtained apartments in Hampton Court, and who lived there in a privacy only accessible to Mr. Pratt. That heavenly-spirited man now dozed away existence in a village curacy near, but was always ready to "dine out on the shortest notice." His parochial duties were, indeed, chiefly of a visitorial character; he consoled the widow, and cheered the solitude of the spinster; men he shunned; but the tender and helpless sex were dear to this "sweet saint;" and by them he was canonised in return—canonised in easy chairs, by warm fire-sides, with neat tea-tables at hand; bands were worked for him, and little urn-rugs, and pocket-handkerchiefs hemmed, and purses woven; and had the day of working slippers arrived, no doubt he would have had a pair for every day in the year.

After Mrs. Howard had left London, it became necessary for William to return home, and he was compelled, unwillingly, to leave Lilia and Honora, for the present, in their lodgings. And now again, when the storms and hurry of life were over, came forth Miss Stewart, like the dove after the deluge, with an olive-branch in her mouth.

Spring was budding, and she sent them violets that delighted the acute sense of Honora, and brought back to Lilia a painful, grateful remembrance of Haskreton. For now, when he for whom she had cared was at rest, the sorrowful certainties of her life returned upon her, and she thought that she could bear them better in the rambles around Haskreton than in the confined streets of London. Miss Stewart, too, supplied them with books—books costly bound, and well-selected—the present, always, "of a friend;" and, hearing that the ladies were soon to leave, she coquetted with them on the subject of an acquaintance, sending them a message one day, "would they like to see her?" and recalling it the next by being "not well enough." Yet she was always well enough to see her male visitant, who was closeted with her for hours.

During all this time Lilia had heard nothing more of Mr. Elphinstone. Her feelings were already softened towards him by the power of affliction, that refiner and soother of our

heart's cares and resentments, but her resolutions were unaltered. William had, to her great surprise, declared, that when the remains of Mr. Howard were carried to St. Anne's Church, Soho, and lowered into the grave of that grim churchyard, he had seen Elphinstone's face, muffled up with his cloak, which he held before him, disclosed for a moment; then, in the anguish of the moment, William had lost sight of it, and had thought of it no more; yet the thought was not unpleasing to Lilia, that Bernard should, even by accident, have been there; that he should, perhaps, have bestowed one thought of regret upon her, the orphan, whose destiny in life promised to be so severe.

It was at this time that Miss Stewart first exchanged her desultory messages into the closer intercourse of correspondence. Every day a note was brought from her, asking how the sisters were—what were their plans for the day—what news of their brother—whether they liked the last book she had sent them—when they should soon go into the country, &c.? Of course Lilia was the responsive correspondent to these missives. They were carried down to the back dining-room by a servant who had lived with Miss Stewart from her infancy, and who seemed perfectly in the confidence of her mistress. And Honora solaced the weary hours by trying to draw forth from this woman some particulars of Miss Stewart; but her curiosity was eluded by general answers.

"Was she young?" "Why, not so young as Miss Lilia, there." "Was she handsome?" "Not so handsome as she had been." "What was her complaint?" "One that had had a great deal of doctoring to very little purpose."

Much did Honora muse upon these vague replies, and even Lilia began to trouble herself as to the real character of Miss Stewart's motives, and her possible demerits. How singular were these visits of her unknown friend! and what could be the motive of all these concealments?

At length, one morning, Dorothy, the old servant, entered with a mysterious air, and, closing the door behind her, gave out that Miss Stewart would be very happy to see Miss Lilia that day, if convenient to her. "You must take her while the whim is on," added Dorothy; "and come about three in the afternoon."

Lilia promised that she would be punctual. She led Honora out, therefore, early, up and down the dry pavement of a street which seems to escape the noise and tumult of the Strand, like a cellar underneath a house, only to be the more dismally serene. At one, they partook of their frugal dinner,

and at three Lilia ascended the broad, old-fashioned staircase, lighted by large and many-paned windows, and found herself, not without a tremor, on the landing-place opposite the room which her father had occupied. Dorothy was there awaiting her; and she led the young lady, without further preface, into the sitttng-room of Miss Stewart.

It was a roomy, and, indeed, airy room, from the windows of which an extensive river scene might be viewed, and it was furnished with comfort, and even elegance. Books, birds, a piano, drawing implements, work tables—all announced preparations for occupation, or incentives to a gentle industry which constitutes one of the luxuries of feminine life: but the work was untouched, the drawing implements huddled together, the books lay in heaps unheeded, and the bird-cage had a handkerchief thrown over it in order to silence its mute and offended occupant. And the river danced in the sunbeams in vain, and the skies were blue and clear in vain, and in vain all that care or love could do to shed a gleam of happiness in that apartment—the dwelling-place of an hypochondriac.

Miss Stewart was past the season of youth, and yet not arrived at middle age. Her features were marked, but elegant; and her figure, as far as could be observed from her recumbent posture, was very tall and well-proportioned. There was a melancholy restlessness in her eyes, an anxiety about nothing, for her disappointments in life had been of her own creating, and her maladies were visionary. Yet was she sinking under the effects of imaginary sorrows and self-conceived diseases.

She welcomed Lilia graciously to the side of her couch, saying,—"You know, I hope, that it is impossible for me to rise, and receive you as I ought? Pray be seated, and near me, may I beg of you," she added, after a moment's pause, "for the room is so dark I cannot see you as I wish."

A few moments passed without their speaking; then Lilia ventured to thank her new friend for the various attentions —the books, the presents.

"Say not a word," cried Miss Stewart; "you have not to thank *me* for that kindness:" she checked herself, and said, carelessly, "they are of no value to me; I seldom read—never draw. I cannot endure work; and there are few moments when I can bear the noise of my piano."

"Then how," thought Lilia, "can you occupy the livelong day?" She soon found, however, the solution of this question; the hourly, momentary feelings were Miss Stewart's occupation; self, her theme; the changes in her frame, and the

little casualties of her physical state, were her sole subjects of thought and object.

Lilia and the invalid talked, however, of a variety of themes, never recurring to herself on Miss Stewart's part; and it was wonderful, to the inexperience of the country girl, how ably the invalid conversed on all subjects; how accomplished she seemed; how admirable a judge of all that was beautiful in art, or excellent in composition; and yet how weak, how credulous, regarding *herself! There* seemed the one vulnerable, unsound part—there the moral canker, amid fragrant virtues, and gifts of rare value.

Lilia was taking her farewell, without one word of the stranger visitant, when Miss Stewart carelessly said—"I hope the knocks of a friend who comes to see me sometimes do not disturb you. He calls at unreasonable hours—generally late."

"No, indeed!" replied Lilia, lingering at the threshold, and longing to ask, "was he young or old, married, or single?"

"He is going out of town soon," said Miss Stewart, adjusting her pillow, "so that—so that—will you kindly ring that bell for me, Miss Howard?—I must get ready a packet of letters he has to take for me."

Lilia bade her good evening. "I make no doubt," she said, to Honora, as she re-entered the back-parlour, "that this visitant of Miss Stewart's is merely some aged relation, who manages her affairs for her—a lawyer, I fancy; or, perhaps—can it be possible, her apothecary?"

"Her apothecary would not be leaving town when every one is coming to it," argued Honora. "A lawyer would never have time to wait on her pleasure as that incognito does. He may be an expectant heir."

In a few days Lilia was again summoned to the invalid's presence: the "friend" was then really gone out of town for a time, and Miss Stewart referred to him more freely. He seemed, according to her notions, to be a model of excellence. When she spoke of high motives and manly actions, she appeared to have a prototype in her mind. Once or twice she touched upon the delicate subject of looks; and, alluding to a fine picture, remarked, "the principal figure reminds me of a certain friend, who was with me last night. It has his air, his brow;" and then she diverged into an account of her last attack of headache, and went minutely into the details of the wrong treatment of half the faculty.

The incognito was not an apothecary, that was evident; and, in the interregnum of his absence, when curiosity languished, and the invalid was left much alone, Lilia's intimacy with her grew and strengthened almost into a friendship. She

found in the invalid a perfect elegance, though combined with many weaknesses of mind and manner. She discovered, coupled to the selfishness of a hypochondriac, a generous and noble nature—great openness, with a love of mystery ; for never could Lilia divine who she was, nor what was the fancy of living in lodgings away, apparently, from every tie. Lilia, on her part, was communicative : she freely told the history of a life without guile, and revealed the condition of her connections. There were only two points on which she was silent—her acquaintance with Mr. Aylmer, and her attachment to Bernard Elphinstone. Miss Stewart noted one of these omissions.

"You have given me, my dear," she said to Lilia one day, "the whole history of your life, but you have never told me one syllable of that which happens to every woman. When—how—where did you lose your heart ?"

Lilia was working at the side of the couch, for her visits were now too long and frequent to be wholly unemployed. She was taken by surprise at the quickness and hardihood of the question.

"Do not answer me," resumed Miss Stewart, "that you never were in love, for I will not believe you. Come, if the flame still burns, it is a prosperous one, and may be revealed. If it is extinct ——" she paused, and looked at the grave countenance of her friend. "I wish," she began again, gaily, for her spirits were high this day, "that you had such a knight at your knees as—as the friend who comes to see me sometimes. What say you to the military profession ?"

"I like it well—far too well," said Lilia.

"What a sigh ! Could you, do you think, tolerate a cavalier of a mournful aspect—one who rarely smiles, except I can draw forth a sunbeam from his countenance ?"

"I should like him all the better for it."

"The very pink of comeliness and débonnairness, yet as careless of his looks as—let me hunt for a comparison—the flower in the field, that grows, and looks well, without knowing it. Tall, manly, majestic, indulgent to one's little failings, yet with none—let me see—only one in his character, and that is—pride."

"'Tis almost a virtue," cried Lilia, "in my eyes."

"Unfortunate too—the ill-fated branch of a noble, but decayed family. All this is very interesting——"

"I hope—I hope," said Lilia, looking up from her work with a face of terror, "that his name is not Aylmer ?"

"Aylmer ! I never heard the name. What made you think of it ? No ; we call him Stewart—by my name ; he's a sort

of a kinsman of mine. Now, pray, in return for my giving you the history of one of my especial favourites, favour me with a description of the gentleman for whom that sigh, some half hour since, was checked so discreetly."

'Oh," said Lilia, gravely, "I never think of him now; I would not willingly recall his image."

"What! you hate him, then?"

"No, I do not hate him; but let us not talk on this subject any more, my dear Miss Stewart. Shall I read to you?"

"If you please. Then—I was just going to say one word before you began. Since you have given up all remembrance of your choice, I hope you will one day see mine—mine for *you*—one whom I know, and am sure deserves you, and would admire you, could I ever prevail on you to see him."

"You are very good; but I have not so entirely forgotten the object of my own choice as to be able to take yours," replied Lilia.

"What! indeed! And there is no chance of its ever coming on again?" asked Miss Stewart.

"Not the slightest. No, never!"

"What! not if he were at your feet this moment?" cried the invalid, starting up on her sofa, and looking earnestly at Lilia; "not it he were to swear to you that he had—contrary, I dare say, to appearances—that he had ever loved you? that he had been misunderstood, perhaps, but that *his* hopes and wishes were the same?" She paused, for the deep glow on Lilia's cheek arrested her attention.

"I should say, perhaps, that it would be too much happiness to think that he had; but I could never renew the engagement."

"You implacable, obstinate, tiresome little creature! Never renew it! And why?"

"I hope." said Lilia, gravely, "I know no undue pride. We are poor enough. God knows, to be humble; but my poverty makes me prouder. My affections were rejected, at first coldly, then with insult."

"I do not believe it." exclaimed Miss Stewart, vehemently.

Lilia looked at her, astonished.

"I mean to say I cannot believe that any one *could* treat you so; I mean—you, young, beautiful, good! But pray, go on—pray tell me all about it."

"I have already told you more than I ever named to any human being, except to one," said Lilia; "but it is over now, and I feel so certain that it never can be renewed. I can depend so well on my own firmness, that I have the less regret," she added, sighing deeply, "to allude to it. I look upon it as

one of those passages in my life to be blotted out and forgotten, if possible."

"You do? Perhaps the strength of your recollections may be, one day, put to the test; but I hope not; I hope that *my* friend may find an interest in your heart. I shall talk to him of you."

"Oh, pray, do not," cried Lilia; "we leave London shortly, and then, I hope, you will do me the kindness to forget all that has passed between us."

"Assuredly" answered Miss Stewart. "Can you doubt it?" she added, with an arch smile.

No one, according to Dorothy, soothed the excesses of ill-regulated sensibility so soon as the stranger; he controlled and pitied them at once; and the influence he had was said to be the result of a long and intimate acquaintance, which Honora and Lilia now suspected was a long and tender engagement; for the imaginations of the young and single generally give that colouring to *all* ties, when not wholly incompatible with circumstances. And Lilia was soon confirmed in this surmise by Miss Stewart's manner. She had been worse, and, after a week's absence, Lilia was again admitted to her room.

Miss Stewart received her with a half-shyness, half-animation of manner; but it went off after a time; yet Lilia observed the invalid often looking at her with a melancholy, and almost a sour expression on her face; and the stranger was not once alluded to, when Lilia ventured to revert to him; Miss Stewart looked offended, and replied, "that there was a coolness, and she had seen little of him lately."

"I must leave you early this evening," said Lilia, "for to-morrow we are going."

"Going!" cried Miss Stewart, "and where? I should have known this sooner. Why did you not insist upon coming up to me? Why did you not force your way into my room? You know what a poor inconsistent, low-spirited creature I am! how little fit to be trusted, even with my own feelings!"

"We shall, however, return," said Lilia, "but only for a few days,—good night!" She kissed the thin hand which lay on the sofa, and left the room; but, before she was half way down stairs, Miss Stewart sent for her back again, "My dear Miss Howard! my sweet, kind, unreproachful Lilia! I fear I was cross to you to-night, but you will forgive a poor, lone, broken-spirited creature like me. I have but one friend, and I fear," she added, in a low voice, "I have displeased him. He, too, forbearing, sympathising, forgiving, as he has been to me, loves me not as he loves another, and *his* affections are

hopeless. This—perhaps I can't bear a rival even in friendship—vexes me—*that*—his unhappiness chafes me too."

"You make me quite interested in him," said Lilia; "What! and can such a person as you describe be unloved? Of what can that woman's heart be made?"

"Sit down here," said the invalid, "and I will tell you all that is irritating this poor, weak frame of mine,—no, I can *not* —go—and I will try and trust myself to speak upon the subject, perhaps, to-morrow. Come, then, to me before you leave; I shall be better then."

Lilia did as she was desired, but, on the following day, Miss Stewart was far too ill to hold any converse with her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SELECT CIRCLE.

THERE was a luxury in the large, warm, unspoilable dining-room of the lodging-house—the luxury of independence. One might stir the fire hourly, without an apology, and have one's own thoughts and feelings uncramped. The sisters talked cheerfully, almost merrily, over their early tea; formed, as well as they might—for who can't?—schemes for the future; and lingered over the loved subject of William's goodness to them, of his sympathy, his liberality, his tenderness and consideration in every trifle for his orphan sisters; for his letters were filled with projects for their comfort, and his own pecuniary advantage appeared to be the last consideration. The plan he arranged was, that they should all live at the manor-house, shutting up a great part of it, and managing with economy, so as to pay off some of the incumbrances, in the hope of forming, eventually, a provision for his sisters out of the proceeds of the farm. To honest minds there is a relief when affairs are wound up and one knows the worst, and feels that, by some personal privations, the path of integrity may be sternly followed out. Such a track is far more satisfactory than the confused though less circumscribed wanderings through a maze, dark and difficult one moment, and lighted up with a false and transient glow the next. A honest poverty is bliss compared with a fallacious splendour.

The solitude of that evening was disturbed by a message

from Miss Stewart; she had been ill, very ill, since their absence, and regretted that she feared she should see them no more. Still the stranger was admitted, and Honora, naturally anxious about appearances, began to entertain very distressing doubts of Miss Stewart's respectability. Suspicions once infused into Honora's mind were not easily dispelled, and she now made many objections to Lilia's holding any further communication with this inexplicable lady.

Whilst these scruples prevailed below stairs, a singular scene was going on in the apartment of the invalid.

A tall, fine looking-young man, her constant visitant, stood irresolutely in the middle of the room. He left her. As he descended the long, dark staircase, the sound of a door opening below made his heart beat. He stopped short. Could *she* then be coming up stairs? Should he then see one whose memory was dearer to him from the perplexities of the past few weeks—of whom he had sometimes caught a transient glance as he paced the street? Should they meet face to face? No! the person who now quitted that room was a gentleman! He rushed out, as if in haste or anger; and the stranger, following him quickly out, thought he recognised the air and height of Mr. Aylmer.

It was, indeed, he, who had dared that night to intrude himself upon an unprotected young lady, who, as he well knew, detested his very presence.

He was received by Lilia with a grave, but modest expression of offended dignity. No unseemly rudeness, no insolence of manner, that could detract from the beautiful attributes of the lady, was betrayed by one who never knew an ungentle sentiment, except to *him*, but who could show stern displeasure without the violence of anger. How he obtained a knowledge of their retreat was long unexplained to Lilia. Their books and work were laid upon the table, when, without a message, without preface of any kind, Mr. Aylmer was shewn in by the servant. Honora unconscious of all that had occurred, arose; Lilia kept her seat; nor did she ask the visitor to sit down; he, therefore, stood—of which Honora was not aware—during the first part of his visit.

His visit bequeathed to Lilia a night of sleepless anxiety. Her first impulse had been to write to her brother, and urge him to come to her, but the dread of embroiling him with a man of so desperate a character as Mr. Aylmer deterred her; her next, to leave town immediately. A transit from London to a remote country was not, in those days, managed as it is now: there was but one coach, and that, or at least its passengers, slept on the road. Places must be engaged a week

beforehand, and the letter which announced their leaving must first have an answer; that letter would be two days in going, two would the reply take. People who fly now, crawled in those days.

But Lilia was resolute and energetic on this occasion. She soon found reasons to induce Honora to believe it for the best that they should leave London; and they commenced such operations as precede a removal.

One visit alone had they to pay, and this was to the lawyer who had managed their father's affairs, and who was an old friend of the family. But as a stiff dinner was to be succeeded by a few young people assembling in the evening, Lilia, after three months of mourning, put off some of those numerous folds and inventions which are supposed to be required for the dead who care not, but which are a compliment to the prejudices of the living, and made some slight change in her general attire. Her hair, luxuriant and rich, was more carefully arranged than usual; her spirits were excited by the little hurry and occupation of getting ready after a long seclusion, and the happy smile of her more careless days—a smile such as the gay loved to look upon in their gaiety, the grave to recall in their melancholy, again played upon her countenance.

Some preliminaries had again paved the way to a renewal of intimacy with Miss Stewart, and Lilia ran upstairs to show herself. A masculine voice was heard within, and Lilia, though the door was half open, held back. "Come in," said Miss Stewart, and after a moment's hesitation, she obeyed. There was no one in the room. The stranger, whoever he was, had retired through a door into the adjoining apartment.

Miss Stewart was a good deal agitated. "Why did you come up so abruptly?" she asked, almost panting for breath. "I—I was not prepared for this."

"For what?" asked Lilia, surprised; "shall I go down stairs again?"

"No, no! Come here,—come, let me look at you! Yes, you *are* beautiful!—there," she added, giving her some lovely flowers which lay on the table, "wear those; they are appropriate to the young and happy, and *not* to me."

She sank back as she spoke. Lilia went near her: but still the flowers which had provoked this sentiment lay unheeded on the table.

"You will not take them?" asked Miss Stewart, looking at Lilia surprised. "Is it not worthy of your acceptance? Would it be more so if it came from—from the idol of your imagination—the still loved object of your affection, though of your anger?"

"No," replied Lilia, putting aside the flower; "I would not accept them then." She started, for a movement in the next room showed her that some one was listening: in a few moments the door of that room was gently closed, and footsteps were heard descending the stairs.

Miss Stewart seemed relieved by those sounds; and appeared morally speaking, to breathe again. She sat up; gave a sort of sigh, as if her overcharged feelings had found vent, and then said,—"You must think me a strange being; but I *will*, before you leave London, explain all my conduct to you. Nay, perhaps I may have courage to do it now. Close that door and sit down: not too near."

She paused for many moments; and the deep silence of the chamber, and the peculiar circumstances of the invalid, gave that scene almost a solemnity. "But I forgot," exclaimed Miss Stewart, suddenly: "you are going out."

"Not at present," replied Lilia. "I dressed early that I might sit with you; therefore, pray let me hear what I have been burning to know."

"You have felt, then," said the invalid, "some interest in my fate? and, perhaps, in that of the friend who visits me?" she added, in a low voice.

"I am deeply interested—almost in love with him," cried Lilia.

Miss Stewart was again silent for an instant, then she said, —I began life as a dependent—and a dependent in Scottish families of rank has no light apprenticeship to serve to Humility. My aunt, whom I shall call Lady Margaret, had another ward, unfortunate, like myself, and indebted to her stern sense of duty—for such was her charity—for a home.

"A lady?" asked Lilia, softly.

"No. A youth, then, indeed, some years younger than myself. To dispatch my tale quickly, the faded invalid, whom you see, was then in the vigour of life; she had hopes, tastes, feelings, fancies too choice, it was thought, for a dependent: they were wounded, crushed; one person alone comprehended and spared them.

"You did, then," said Lilia, "engage his affection? Ah! my dear Miss Stewart, I have guessed it long."

"No (the word was uttered in a decisive tone); he had mine; we were thrown together much, too much;—I loved him. Oh! how intensely, ill health and misery can tell."

"And he trifled with your happiness?" asked Lilia, mournfully,

"Never! When at last, for his mind was occupied with other hopes, and with aims of a higher nature, *I* permitted

him to know it—for my feelings, inwardly preying, and in solitude, had not the blessing of any controlling power—he gently, kindly, but clearly told me the truth. I could not bear it! Reason gave way;—do not, do not asked me more—*he* was not to blame. Oh, how for years has he maintained the poor hypochondriac—for our mutual relative is long since dead! How he has watched over my happiness—endeavoured to soothe my miseries! He has given me of late—for he is now poor—what, I much fear, impoverishes and cramps his own efforts. You see the luxuries, the sources of occupation which are lost upon me. Alas, alas! these are all *his* doing!" She wept as she spoke. Lilia was greatly affected.

"It may not be for long," said Miss Stewart, drying her tears. "I hope not: he will have one burden less; his generous heart many privations the less; and one sad being for whom he has cared will be in port, I trust."

"So noble a being must be happy!" said Lilia; "and, depend upon it, *he* would deeply deplore the loss of an object of interest so great as you have been."

"I do not know that," replied Miss Stewart, sadly. "Of late he has been unhappy." She turned, and looked at Lilia; there was something in her gaze so expressive that Lilia was startled, and the involuntary "How?" fell from her lips with a peculiar force.

"He has formed an unworthy attachment. Yes, I will call it unworthy, for the object of it mistrusts and shuns him. His situation is one of difficulty and mystery; and the being who should of all others confide in his honour has cast him off.

"That may be his representation," said Lilia, thoughtfully. "It is impossible to judge always of these matters unless you hear both sides of the question. But he still, still is attached to this lady?"

"Do not ask me about it," replied Miss Stewart, somewhat petulantly; "I am tired now." She sank down on her sofa for some time, and covered her face with her handkerchief. Lilia, who had studied every mood of that wayward being, sat by her patiently, until she again spoke.

"He has been angry with me: we have had, of late, many disputes; for, to avow to you the truth, I believed all feelings extinct whilst I saw him wholly devoted to myself. I thought, and so did he, that the folly which maddened me, which took me—ah! Miss Howard, from my home—was conquered; but—but I heard I had a rival, young, lovely, loving. I could not bear it: my mind has, I fear, been again excited; I fear so, indeed; and I broke out in reproaches to him who has provided for me, nursed me, soothed me, pitied me!"

"But he has been kind and merciful to you," asked Lilia, "even then?" She took the hand of the invalid in hers, and her tears fell fast over it. There are few things more touching to all than the stricken ones of this life—the sick, or the crippled, or those whose lives have been blighted with mental or bodily infirmity,—the slaves of feelings suitable only to the happy and healthy, and, if cherished by the helpless or the sickly, cherished in shame, with mortification almost, sometimes, to insanity.

Miss Stewart was soothed by Lilia's sympathy. "He has, indeed; but I nave tried his patience severely; and he has left me sometimes declaring that he would see me no more: and I have been angry, too, forgetting his own grave anxieties and sorrows. Such is my story: let it rest sacred in your memory; and now, go—good night. May God bless you! and spare you, dear Lilia, from an unreasonable and hopeless affection; for a greater temptation to all malice and uncharitableness there is not. Good night!"

Lilia took a reluctant leave. The faint show of gaiety which she was soon to witness seemed to her tender and beautiful feelings repulsive, compared with the earnest pent-up emotions of a sad and solitary heart. She proceeded with a funereal step to join Honora. What share sympathy for the stranger, and a certain disappointment in the romance of the affair, in finding that his affections were engaged, had in that seriousness, it is difficult to decide. It is, however, certain that an attachment to one man does not preclude the admission of a strong interest in another, in many female minds.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RED LION SQUARE.

The relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Howard and family, and Mr. and Mrs. Grimsby and family, had long been unremembered, until debts and difficulties brought the former into the mighty power of the lawyers. Then it was recollected that the once proud lord of the manor-house had a cousin—that that cousin was Proctor, and lived genteelly, not near Doctors' Commons, but in Red Lion Square, with his wife and daughter.

Mr. Grimsby was a lettered man as well as a lawyer, very old-fashioned in his ways, for he had an old-fashioned respect

for relationships, and an instinctive regard for cousins ; which showed itself periodically and substantially : at Christmas, in a turkey—on Twelfth Night, in a cake ; and so on progressively through the year, until it closed in a Michaelmas goose. He was very pompous, very positive, and made you always feel that he was doing you a favour ; his dress was an uncompromising memorial of the days of bob-wigs and single-breasted coats, without an inch of variation, which he would have looked upon as next to heresy. He had lived, ex-professionally, with many great men, upon some sort of terms, and remembered Johnson with reverence, Goldsmith with affection, and Gray with enthusiasm ; and descended with difficulty to the modern milk-and-water of literature: yet he had not an imaginative faculty within him, and his merits consisted in an exact, hard memory, a great self-reliance, and a respectable and laudable contempt for every one else.

His wife was a good, fat creature—stone-deaf—having had, at the outset, a pretty fortune, which had been the means of Mr. Grimsby's wealth. She had been a belle as well as a fortune, and had figured at the Mansion House during her uncle's mayoralty, in a minuet with Frederick of Wales. This had by no means upset her reason, for she talked of it as naturally as she did of her uncle's saddles and bridles, he having been a saddler.

The daughters were contrasts: one was fat and silly, like her mother ; the other thin and wise, like her father : both were plain, both on the turn from middle-age downwards—that fatal turn which ends the age of romance in woman, though not in man ; both were peculiar, as who could help being, living in Red Lion Square ?

The society at Mr. Grimsby's was that, the abolition of which may, by many, be regarded as an evil. It consisted, generally, of the uninvited. Dinner was served at five, in a dining-room fit for forty persons. There was, then, a rush of barristers from their courts, artists from their easels, players from their rehearsals, as might be, poets from the clouds, or from the not-extinct Grub-street, and clients from the Doctors' Commons. No difference was made for any one,—you might sit down ten, and rise up fifty, and there were always fragments left ; and a maid and a man, geniuses in the art of waiting of the highest order, were the sole attendants. Capital, abundant wines, an eternal round of beef, an inexhaustible ale-cellar, and a dirty table-cloth, were the characteristics of the dinner. The conversation, of course, was varied. Lawyers at the top, authors at the bottom, listened meekly to long stories of Johnson and Boswell.

The party were not assembled when Lilia led her sister into the room; when, amongst a group of young lawyers, Lilia observed the countenance of Sholto Elphinstone. He was intently observing her when she looked at him; he then bowed very slightly, and turned away. In a few minutes he observed her again; her face was now flushed, and an expression of vexed confusion sat upon it, and Sholto endeavoured to read what that meant. There were, it is to be hoped, but few in the world who could doubt that innocent and speaking expression; but Sholto, under the strong hand of prejudice, was one who could: he began to dislike her whom he had injured. He was resolved to work himself up to a certain tone of feeling with regard to Lilia, and hopes, which were now strong within, lent force to his predilections; and he felt a greater disgust than ever to such an alliance for his brother, for the head of the proud and long-descended Elphinstones; and all these mean and actually debasing notions he covered over, to his own mind, with a mask of brotherly affection. As, in the course of the evening, he discovered that the host of Red Lion-square was a relation of the Miss Howards, his aversion to the match increased, and he revolved in his unscrupulous mind, perverted by the worst conceptions of a noble study, what further course he should take, in case that acquaintance should happen ever to be renewed.

Lilia, on the other hand, regarded Sholto with a mixture of sadness and resentment. He was totally unlike Bernard; there was, nevertheless, a brotherly look between them—a turn of the head, a sound of the voice, that brought back to the aching heart of the still enamoured Lilia, the first and last object of her affections. She almost groaned in spirit, for, when the feelings have been severely wounded, such resemblances give acute pain instead of pleasure. She rejoiced when she found herself at the opposite end of the table to that where Sholto sat.

Her lot it was to be placed next to a gentleman of middle age, and of those decided attributes which impress the stamp of good society. He was a client of Mr. Grimsby's, and evidently a man of birth and fortune, yet no pretensions betrayed a contempt of his company, the majority of which were evidently far beneath his accustomed society; nor did that still more offensive condescension grate upon the fastidious.

Sholto marked him from the first, for inquisitiveness, joined to a power of the minutest observation, was one of his most offensive qualities. "Who is that gentleman?" he asked of a neighbouring barrister.

"It is Sir Henry Aylmer, a cousin of my Lord Ravenspur's," was the reply.

"More celebrated," whispered Sholto, sneeringly, "as the relation, I presume, of the distinguished Mr. Aylmer."

"A distant one, I believe: he has just come into a large estate, and is a capital client to old Grimsby; he must marry now. Who is that lady near him?'

Sholto was startled by the question. "A Miss Howard; but he will never look in *that* quarter. It would be such an inferior, such a low connexion. Do you know what he has?"

"Some seven or eight thousand a-year, besides immense expectations."

Sholto again gazed at Sir Henry; he observed that the baronet was more engaged in conversation with Lilia, and he saw enough to make out that the middle-age man was not insensible to the fairness and symmetry of the countenance that was partially turned towards him; and he fancied he saw that Lilia was not reluctant to accept those grave and quiet attentions, and to attract—such was the ill-natured construction of Sholto—the man of thousands. "Bernard will be supplanted," he said to himself, and his eyes were fixed upon the averted face of Lilia, until the ladies arose from the dinner-table.

A scrambling tea succeeded the lavish, inelegant dinner; some young cousins joined the party, and a country-dance was proposed by some of the young men, not the wiser for the last bottle of port, in the back drawing-room. The Miss Grimsbys, grave as they seemed, footed it away in an *allemande;* whist-tables were formed in the larger room, and soon Mr. and Mrs. Grimsby were planted there. Sholto lingered unemployed, his eyes rivetted on Sir Henry Aylmer, who did not dance, neither did he play—who had an appointment at nine o'clock, yet who still lingered near the old-fashioned mantelpiece, where Lilia and Honora were seated.

"You were talking," he said to Lilia, "of —— shire; do you happen to know Haskreton?"

"We live there—at least, at the manor-house," replied Lilia.

"Indeed! I have a relation, whom I have not seen for some years, there, close to you—Lord Ravenspur. Do you know him?"

Lilia hesitated. "He was my father's landlord."

"And as such you knew him *only*, if I may interpret your meaning," said Sir Henry, looking pleased at her hesitation. "Are you returning to Haskreton?"

"That depends on circumstances; but I believe—indeed I have no doubt—but that we shall."

Sir Henry hesitated for an instant in his turn. "Perhaps, then, we may meet there," he resumed. "I believe I must—I ought to visit Ravenspur when we go back. He has given us all much uneasiness, and his late excellent father much sorrow; but a man should not be wholly cast off from his relations on that account. Perhaps you can tell me what is become of my cousin Harry Aylmer?"

"No," said Lilia, quickly, "that I cannot."

Sholto marked the blush, the look of distress, and nothing was noted down in vain.

"What! is he not, then, a favourite?" asked Sir Henry, smiling.

"No, indeed, he is not."

"Lilia," broke forth Honora, suddenly, "what are you saying? We saw Mr. Aylmer the other evening, and he sat some time with us."

"You had forgotten it?" asked Sir Henry, evidently as inquisitive as Sholto, though in a very different spirit.

Lilia was silent. Just at that moment a break in the whist-party occurred. Mr. Grimsby walked up to the fire, and stirred it solemnly; and Mrs. Grimsby turned round, full of kind apprehensions about the comfort of the Miss Howards, of whose welfare it took much voice to convince her. The party in the back drawing-room were all this while dancing hands-four-round, and *pousette*.

"Ah! ah!" said Mr. Grimsby, as he accurately snuffed the candles, looking at his daughter, "it is pleasant to see young people enjoying themselves."

"It is, indeed," said Sir Henry, looking, for the first time, into the dusty back drawing-room, "a cheering sight!"

Small relays of negus were now pouring in, the party were just beginning to cut for their whist-table again, when a servant came in to announce Miss Howard's coach (one of those dear, departed, roomy glass coaches, unknown to a puny generation, who move about in flies and broughams).

Mr. Grimsby instantly put down his cards, and moved up to hand Lilia and Honora to their carriage, but Sir Henry interposed; he was about to give Lilia his arm; when Mr. Grimsby said: "Sir Henry, your eyes are better than mine, and your step is firmer; let my cousin Honora have your arm, and I shall have the honour of conducting my cousin Lilia."

But at this announcement both the Miss Grimsbys rushed into the front room. "Papa, remember your rheumatism," said the eldest.

"Sir," cried the younger, and more sensible one, "you'll be an hour getting down stairs and up again."

Mr. Grimsby hesitated. "Well then," he said, stopping short, "There's Mr. Elphinstone there. You're young and hearty, sir. Bless me! how slow your present fine gentlemen are, compared with what they were! Cousin Lilia, do this young gentleman here the honour to accept his arm to your carriage."

Sholto at this came respectfully towards Lilia, and, coupled together, they went slowly and silently down stairs. "I am not sorry for this arrangement," thought Sholto, "for I shall see what sort of a carriage they come in, and where they drive to."

Lilia was the last to get in. As she seated herself in the carriage, Sholto inquired what address? Lilia gave it; observing, however, that the coachman had brought them there.

Sholto started when he heard the address. "No. 52! did you say?" he asked, with an unfeigned surprise: "Are you *sure?*"

"Yes," replied Lilia, in her turn surprised; "we have lived there some months."

The glass-coach rolled away, and Sholto walked, stopping to look at it till it had turned the corner of the square, to his chambers. As he entered the low-browed arch of Gray's Inn he overtook his brother.

"Do you know," he whispered to Bernard, as he placed his arm within his, "that the Miss Howards are absolutely living under the same roof with your old friend, Miss Stewart?"

"Yes, I have known it some time."

Sholto pondered upon this. It was evident to him that his brother was still infatuated—to use his own phrase—with Lilia Howard. He felt provoked by Bernard's obstinacy, taking into consideration that the Elphinstone estates, if ever recovered, would take a great deal of nursing to recover them from the heavy law expenses, and that nothing could so effectually restore them as a successful marriage.

For the first time, he thought of the approaching departure of his brother with satisfaction; for Bernard's regiment was now ordered to a quarter where active operations would soon efface, he thought, the weak regrets of the love-sick. They entered Sholto's chambers, and talked over the approaching separation. To Sholto's surprise, he found that Bernard had many gloomy forebodings that he should never return—hope seemed extinct, and he appeared to have nothing to care or to live for. It was in vain that Sholto recalled to him the revival of hopes intimately connected with both their future welfare—at this time they failed to inspire and to console. To the one brother, the world, and its good and ill opinions, were

everything; to the other they seemed, at that moment, as chaff before the wind.

"What can it matter to me," said Bernard, mournfully, "if I should ever recover my name and estates? I shall never marry; and as a soldier I may, in these times, if I live, win the way to honour. To you, and to your children, dear Sholto, it may be much."

"Oh! as to my marrying," returned the young lawyer with a smile, "I shall take care not to be taken in for *that*, unless it is something that can raise my family: that I look on as a duty, Bernard."

Bernard was silent.

"Referring, as you will do me the justice to say, to your known predilections, I am reminded of it by our talk of marriage. I am sorry to hear, as I did to-night, that that wretch, Aylmer, is a visitor of the Miss Howards—I am sorry for it."

"Where were you to-night?" asked Bernard, thoughtfully.

"Only dining out with old Grimsby, the proctor—*their* relation, it seems. And these young ladies, if one can call the elder one so, were there.

"Is the youngest looking well?" asked Bernard, in a low voice.

"Very much so—less of the farmer's daughter than formerly, and more of the lady; and receiving, with evident gusto, the attentions of Sir Henry Aylmer. But his disreputable relative——"

Bernard interrupted him: "Say not one word that can impute such a predilection to her! I will never credit it. But she is young and unprotected. Sholto, if it should happen that I do not return from the Continent for some years, and you see and know her to be in danger from that man, warn her, watch over her, for *my* sake."

"I did not think it was so serious an affair," replied Sholto, returning the strong pressure of his brother's hand, and scrupling not, even at that solemn moment—for all expression of strong feeling *is* solemn—to equivocate. Be assured I will, and if anything prejudicial to her should meet my ear, I will write to you, and make you aware of——"

"No," said Bernard, "do not, I could never bear to hear it. If aught of good befalls her," he added, in a faltering voice, "you may tell me."

He was subdued almost to tears. Sholto marvelled, but rejoined, "That, I think, by no means improbable, if she knows her own interest; for it is evident that Sir Henry Aylmer is much captivated with her."

Bernard made no reply; but, walking forth into the dull inclosure of Gray's Inn, was glad even for the imitation of fresh air therein to blow upon his pensive countenance. He hurried on, a solitary being among thousands, to his lodgings. There he found two letters: the one being an order to set off on the following day to join his regiment, the other a note from Dorothy, written at nine o'clock that evening, to beg him to come to her mistress instantly—for she was dying.

There are moods in which even a distressing event arouses —it does us good, especially when it comes not too closely *home*. Bernard was shocked at the summons, and yet it drew him from that inert despondency which succeeds a long season of trial.

He was quickly at Miss Stewart's door, where a servant met him with tearful eyes. In an instant his quick footstep was heard ascending the stairs.

It was heard by one individual, who, undressed, sat in her own room, awaiting another and a better account of the invalid before she retired to rest: Lilia, in her solitary chamber, heard it. How little could she foretell how much of happiness it portended to her!

A long hour past, and no news of the invalid, whose increased illness had alarmed the house, reached her; at last, a gentle tap came at the door.

"Miss Lilia, are you awake?" said the voice of Dorothy. "Will you come to my mistress?"

Lilia followed her instantly. The door was half open when she reached the room to which she was summoned: some one was bending over Miss Stewart. Lilia shrank back, when she gained courage, and entered.

The invalid had her hand in that of the stranger, who had long, so long, visited and sustained her. As Lilia drew near the bed, Miss Stewart, with a strong and sudden impulse grasped her hand—then placed it in that of the stranger.

"Be," she said, "all that you have once been to each other." She spoke—and fainted.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOME, AND ANXIETY.

It was a long winter's evening, and Honora sat by the fire at her knitting, whilst Lilia, buried in the great leathern arm-

chair, was reading, with wondering gaze and fitful attention, some new work of that unliterary period. William, at his desk, was pondering over his accounts, for it was Saturday evening, and William had now a serious calling in existence—the maintenance of his sisters, and of the family respectability, both matters of grave consideration.

Two years had passed over the heads of this trio since the events which had left them poor, and with little apparent solace in life, except their mutual affection ; and these two years seemed to have had, on William and Lilia, the effect of five. He was now, though scarcely thirty, claiming the characteristics of a middle aged man. Now, I should be annihilated by the young daughters of England, were I to say what I think, that the middle age is, in man, the perfection of his career, supposing that career to have been an honourable, if not a happy one. There is a vigour of mind, and a steadiness of purpose which weak women admire, no less than respect, in an intellectual middle age. There is a moderation and a prudence, kindly plants in the hot-bed of society ; there is, above all, an indulgence to small failings, which one rarely discovers in the raw opiniatedness of what is falsely called ingenuous youth.

The weaknesses and smallnesses of William Howard's character, had been clipped off in the process which the actual business of life compels. He had mingled more with his fellow-men, and less with his sister-women, than heretofore. His diffidence, the morbid result of retirement and ignorance, waned beneath the soft lights of experience, for he found how many there were in the world who estimated him for his mild virtues, without considering his position or his means. For the rest—for I must hurry over this now mournful remembrance of this excellent specimen of the "middle ages"—his whiskers, short and unobtrusive, were slightly tinged with grey. Yes, even at thirty, his hair betrayed an incipient baldness ; his figure was more stooping than formerly ; his dress homelier, and far more careless ; and there was a wrinkle or two upon his anxious brow, which spoke of past difficulties and present uncertainties. But the kind smile, the agreeable voice, and deferential manner, acted blithely as reliefs to those traces of care which had, too early, ripened William's path into middle age.

Lilia had sustained her share in the general doom of change. Her health had become variable. "Hope, long deferred, not only maketh the heart sick," but the body weak ; and there was often a dreamy, anxious expression in her beautiful eyes which, some might think, deteriorated from that rare beauty,

still the boast of the neighbourhood. In my opinion, and I speak from sad remembrance, it added to it a charm, inasmuch as the real characteristics of feeling ever lend a dignity to the human countenance. Her youthful loveliness had delighted the eye, but her maturer expression found its incense in the heart. And, perhaps, even the variableness of her looks, their pensive paleness one hour, their bright sensibility the other, endowed Lilia with a stronger interest than the repose of her sunny youth had even permitted; at all events, there were not few who were of that opinion.

Thus looked the pair; and the scene around them denoted changes—but a change from false appearances to a true position—a change from concealed anxieties to real contentment. The huge drawing-room, with its scanty furniture, aping grandeur, was shut up; shut up were most of the bed-rooms of the manor-house; shut up were the principal dining-room and library; and all, save the hall, used by William for the deposit of his guns, and the storehouse of old furniture and pictures; that, however, was unclosed, and through it you passed into a long passage, conducting you to a small, quiet, homely parlour, wherein, by this arrangement, saving the expense of a household, William and his sister habitually sat. A smaller room had been converted into a dining-room, and a few bedrooms, selected from various parts of the house, were still opened for use.

The evening before alluded to was passed in silence, until the hour of eight, when Lilia, suddenly laying down her book, arose and said, "I thought I heard the postman's horn; or was it the wind?"

"It is the wind," replied William, looking at his watch, "for it is not quite eight," he added; for he read her feelings.

Lilia, with a sigh, sat down again. For the last hour the wind had mocked her with false hopes; it was such a cunning dissembler! How it whistled in the nooks of the old house! then bellowed down the avenue; then murmured in the recesses of the hall, often simulating the distant sounds of that faithful messenger of good and ill, whose importance is never so important as in the long calm of a winter's evening. Again Lilia listened; and again, checking a sigh this time, she said, "It *is* only the wind!"

She looked at her sister, ostensibly for corroboration, but actually for refutation; for the keen sense of the benighted Honora could catch, through the mysteries of complicated sounds, the distant wailing of that horn, the harbinger of fate, and, whilst sitting carelessly at her work, she was generally the first to announce its approach; and this night, after a

moment's pause, she said, "It *is* the postman—he is up the avenue. I hear his horse's hoof on the hard ground."

Lilia flung down her book, and hastened to the hall-door; she returned, holding the post bag in her hand. William guarded the treasure; the key of that volume of misery, or storehouse of joy, hung with his watch keys; as he opened it he saw that his youngest sister trembled; he hastened to undo it, and took out the letters. What a moment was it when he looked them over! "One, two, three, for me—all on business, I fancy; one, no, none for you, Lilia. I fear we shall not hear from the Continent at present."

"I think we shall *never* hear!" exclaimed Lilia, bursting into tears, as the empty post-bag fell from her hand.

"Don't say so, dear Lilia; think of the chances that a letter does not come safe to hand; think of the late storms at sea—take everything into consideration."

"I have, I have, but it will not do; either he has fallen in that last engagement, or he has been ill, or wounded, or he has forgotten what a sad heart *pines* to hear from him!" said Lilia, with a strong and mournful emphasis on that expressive word.

"It may be, but don't give up hope just yet, Lilia," said William, supporting her head on his shoulder.

"Hope?" cried Honora, "to give up hope whilst you have faith in the honour of a true-born gentleman, and trust in Heaven!"

Lilia only answered with a sigh, but William uttered gently a reluctant "To be sure." He had not the same confidence in Bernard Elphinstone as his sister had. He could not comprehend his various changes nor his present silence. He had seen Lilia, during the last two years, drooping one day like a blighted flower, under the heart-sickness of uncertainty; reviving another, when intelligence, or even the slightest hope of intelligence, arrived. William had felt a secret resentment at all this; he judged as brothers, not as sisters judge. He deemed it cruel in a man to plant the thorn and leave it to fester during months and years; absent himself, occupied, perhaps forgetful, whilst the doomed object of his ill-starred preference remained at home to sigh, pine, hope—may be, to sink! His heart bled, therefore, for Lilia, and he secretly, but strongly, condemned Elphinstone.

After a silence of some duration, Lilia, who had calmed her agitation, turning to her brother, observed, "William, this is a sad scene for you, again and again, cutting up all the happiness of your evenings. I will make a resolution—indeed I will—to be calm and hopeful, resigned, whatever may happen."

She spoke valiantly, but the sinking voice proclaimed the struggle.

"My dear Lilia," said her brother, "I would rather be sad with you than merry with any one else. I am glad, however, that you speak as you do, and we must hope—we *must* hope—that Mr. Elphinstone will act like a man of honour; but here is a letter, I did not like to show it you at first, that somewhat concerns you. No, dear Lilia, you need not shrink," he added, holding out the letter, "it contains no renewed addresses from Sir Henry Aylmer, but only to propose that you will allow him to call, and to visit as a friend, sincerely interested—these are his own words—in the happiness of our family. Can you possibly object? He does us an honour, certainly—a man of great wealth, influence, character. I should have been very shy of seeking his acquaintance upon those accounts, but he has sought *us*. What say you, Lilia?"

"If I can be quite sure that the subject you have referred to will never be renewed, I should—I must be happy to see any one *you* like," said Lilia, disconsolately; I am sorry—I am angry with myself," she added, weeping as she spoke, "to be again so unfit even for your society, William, as I am to-night; pardon me, and good night."

She rose hastily, and a moment afterwards the door closed upon her, and then the listening Honora heard the hall-door close.

"She is gone to her own room," she observed, suspending her work for an instant. Then she turned her face towards her brother. It would almost seem as if she could *see* the vexation painted there, for she said, "Never mind, William; this cannot last long; we shall be sure to hear from Mr. Elphinstone soon, and then all will be right."

"I don't know that," replied William.

"What, you mean as to the estates? but what matters *those?* He has the right, Lilia is sure of it, and they can but be poor; his birth is the same, whether by the iniquity of others he be kept from his birthright or not. That cannot alter *facts*. And then," pursued Honora, almost as in a reverie, without remarking her brother's significant silence, "he can win for himself an honourable distinction, military rank. What can be nobler or more suitable to the race of heroes from whom he is descended? Already has he distinguished himself at Fontenoy; you sigh, William—I can almost fancy you are shaking your head at what I say."

"No, I was only wondering whether a little warm wine and water would not be good for Lilia," replied the unromantic William. "I will take her some, at any rate."

He arose, opened a cupboard formed in the deep wall, and took out some of the rarely tasted Madeira, kept there for hospitality, but seldom indulged in by the inmates of that house of stern economy ; and whilst he uncorked the bottle, and took out sugar and nutmeg, and rang for warm water, Honora still sat absorbed, carrying on the epic of her imagination from the battle of Fontenoy onwards, William silently, and almost sadly, mixed the reviving potation, most cruelly and needlessly prohibited by the fanaticism of temperance, and then took it up, through many a long passage and doorway, to Lilia's room. This was a dismal, panelled chamber, at the other extremity of the house, but Lilia had retained it as the original lodgment of her girlhood. We become fond of the room which has witnessed our lonesomeness, and of the walls which have re-echoed to our sighs.

Lilia was seated by the deep, spacious hearth. "I hope you have a good fire, Lilia," said her brother, setting down his compound, and heaping logs of wood on the blazing pile : "do not spare—if you saw such stacks as I have in the orchard!"

"Ah!" said Lilia, gently, "were I to obey you, William, I should spare nothing. How kind of you to come up to me! Spoiled creature as I am, how shall I ever learn to bear a harsh word! and I suppose one must meet with such in life."

William shook his head. "The world is very bad, Lilia, I believe ; although I, at this moment, have no particular reason to say so. I could not, Lilia, tell you all that Sir Henry's letter contained—a most generous proposal of his cousin, Lord Ravenspur : he absolutely wipes off all the mortgages on the farm, which my father, poor man! was obliged to incur ; and leaves me—being satisfied with the efforts I have made to pay the interest, as far as he is concerned—free from all incumbrance. I feel ashamed and loathe to accept this generosity ; but, then, I must think of my sisters. You don't seem to comprehend me, Lilia?"

"Yes, I do ; but has he no motive—no wrong motive?" asked Lilia, arousing herself from deep thought.

"How can he have? And are we not bound to trust him, as a nobleman, as a generous, though, perhaps, thoughtless landlord, and as a reformed man?"

"You think that?" asked Lilia, eagerly.

"I really do ; because I perceive that Sir Henry Aylmer, a man of high character and respectability, now takes him by the hand ; and I think it not improbable but that his lordship may return to the county again."

Lilia shuddered. "I am very weak," she said, after a pause

of some moments, "but I have quite a misgiving that this renewal of Sir Henry Aylmer's visits may bring us into some trouble. I tremble, indeed, at every event," she added, sorrowfully, "whether of good or evil."

"Well, then," replied William, evidently vexed by her remark, "let us decline the honour of Sir Henry's visits."

"No—oh, no!—I would not for worlds oppose any wish of yours: pray do not consider *me*. Anything that will relieve your mind, dear William, will relieve mine," she added, cheerfully; and a smile again illumed William's face.

The truth is, that William's self-esteem, generally at low water, had been swollen to high tide of late by the various attentions of Lord Ravenspur and his relations. Sundry provincial dignities had been thrust upon the modest man, who now farmed the property as a tenant which his forefathers had hunted over, when it lay before them, an old park filled with ancient timber. William had never fully felt his position until his father's death: then, the meekness of his character could not conceal that a morbid pride lay at the root of all his many good and few bad qualities. The soothing process applied by Lord Ravenspur won over one of limited ideas, and weak where his feelings were concerned; and his kind and grateful heart revived in reverence for that aristocratic neighbour who "bore his faculties as a landlord" so meekly.

Pleased at his sister's concessions, William left her; and Lilia, sinking back in her chair, revolved in her mind the meaning of these overtures, and reviewed, as an auxiliary to her conclusions, the events of the last few years. Her recollections, as is usual, fastened upon one particular passage of her life—that brief hour of bliss—when, by the bedside of the strange invalid, her hand was placed in that of Elphinstone—when hurried explanations seemed to show that they had misunderstood each other—that both were true—both were fond, though both had seemed cold—both had appeared estranged; and it wanted but that *one* word, that moment so often withheld by Fate in the bickerings of this life, to set all matters upon their proper footing.

Then he had been hurried away to his regiment, before there had been time for renewed confidence to perfect the work on either side—the cup of joy had been held tantalisingly to the parched lip, and still was it proffered, but with how many drawbacks to its final and full enjoyment!

Afterwards, distastefully, the mind of the thoughtful Lilia reverted to the addresses of Sir Henry Aylmer. These had commenced soon after her return to Haskreton, for he had followed her to that neighbourhood. He was, as every one

knew, looking out for a wife—an announcement which would have greatly impeded his suit to Lilia, had not her heart been pre-occupied ; for there is something to a truly delicate woman revolting in being sorted out, systematically, like a servant at a domestic bazaar—selected on approval, like a new pattern, and married for good reasons, as royal brides are. There is a horror to the true woman's heart in this prudent and proper procedure ; she wishes a man to fall blindly and unconsciously in love with her, and not to commit the folly upon deliberate conviction ; and those discreet engagements, usually so much applauded by the sagacious, rarely answer their purpose as well as love, without that strong infusion of reason ;—love, not distilled of its peccant and frothy properties, but effervescing enough to carry on its objects through all those vicissitudes of life's journey which require a seasoning of affection to make them endurable.

So thought Lillia ; and she felt little complimented by being selected as the mistress of a noble house and large property, because some one must undertake it ; and because Sir Henry, in looking over his list of female worthies, could find no one so competent as herself—to say nothing of the aversion which she bore to the name and race of Aylmer.

At this critical period, however, she dreaded rather the renewal of Sir Henry's visits. She trembled lest she should *ever*, by any reasons, be induced to entertain his proposals. What though Bernard—silent during the past year, had looked elsewhere for happiness, or had perished loving her ? Should she—could she ever be tempted to bestow the hand pledged to him to another ? She shuddered at the idea ! and, arousing herself, betook herself to those consolatory and holy lessons of life, wonderfully applicable to the suffering and the erring, eternally prophetic, majestically sublime, which are contained alone in one volume. With them, there is no solitude to the heart-stricken.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A GREAT MAN'S RETURN TO HIS POSSESSIONS.

Lord Ravenspur, as William had predicted, calculated on returning to his own country, and re-establishing himself at Haskreton. He had now spent some considerable time abroad, where possibly his doings were not such as could creditably

be conveyed across the water. Like many of his countrymen, it was best for him that his fame should be confined to the Continent; and a blank in his history was a desirable circumstance. He took the benefit of an expensive postage, and his sins remained behind him. People naturally concluded that he must be reformed this time, or that he never would be; they concluded, therefore, that he must be so. Some marbles and large pictures preceded his return to the hall; and the arrival of these, intimating that he meant to reside a good deal there, was welcomed upon the easy principle that it was better for the neighbourhood that the house should be opened than shut—a dictum of questionable truth in some cases.

Lord Ravenspur arrived early in the day, about a week after the evening I have described. The bells rang, a flag waved from the church-steeple, and the tenantry, meeting his lordship at some distance, attended him to his home. Something bowing, topped with a fur cap, might be detected through the coach windows; then that figure sank back, and was seen no more until it alighted upon the steps of the hall-door. Presently the poor shattered frame of the once handsome Lord Ravenspur might be observed, clad in costly furs and velvets; in fact, he seemed all velvet and fur; for, throwing off his surtout, a thin, bending form appeared before those who had witnessed his growth from his neglected infancy to boyhood, from his rash boyhood to his wild youth, and who now beheld him sunk, as it were, into middle age without that gradual change, that twilight of years which prepares us for the several seasons of life. They remembered, as they looked at Lord Ravenspur, that he was scarcely thirty; yet the stockings hung about his legs, and his hands were almost transparent; his voice was clear, but feeble; and his brow as wrinkled as if this favourite of Fortune had had every ill of penury to encounter.

His eye was, however, bright, and his energies apparently in their fullest force. He addressed himself to his steward, saying, cheerfully, "Pray is the monument I sent over from Italy placed in the church? Have you the keys? Let us go and see it. Meantime," he added, carelessly, "let the usual distributions of ale and wine take place."

He turned from the assembled tenantry, and, amid a cheer, which may have stung as a reproof, walked towards the church. As he went, he looked back, and bowed with his usual grace, but not with his usual steadiness.

Lord Ravenspur was grave, as he walked on: perhaps it might recur to him as the one thing wanting—a faithful, fond heart to welcome him—a wife—a child! Strange to say he

was not wholly dead even to good feelings—and he felt this. But he was stimulated by certain objects, as he went, striking his now critical eye as requiring alteration, or, in some instances, obliteration. It was curious to see how the man of no pursuit hailed these excuses for change, and pleas for expense, and from time to time addressed his steward, "Ha! that fence must be taken away! I cannot endure it intersecting the best part of the pleasure-ground. There's a great want of character in that green slope yonder. I want statues, or a group of some kind, on the level part. I see there's a great deal to be done," he added, with an air of contentment.

The steward marvelled; for he knew not, in days of old, a being more indifferent to sylvan beauties—more careless of his own credit, in every way,—than his lord. "He's reforming, surely," he said to himself.

Lord Ravenspur at this moment stopped short. "The church is sadly dilapidated, certainly."

The old steward laughed outright—he was so diverted, so surprised. "If you please, my lord, it has been so these hundred years, and no one ever thought about it; and I can remember the day when your lordship was pleased to amuse yourself by throwing gravel at those painted windows."

"I wish I had remembered *those*," said Lord Ravenspur, thoughtfully. "I saw some beautiful painted glass at Amiens. The national religion must be supported," he added, confounding, in his own mind, the dictates of his taste, with the zeal of religion.

"Besides," rejoined the steward, sadly, "there be so many of your lordship's family buried in the church."

The remark did not please. Lord Ravenspur looked down, as if, returning from those climes, so disconnected with all social remembrance, the first recollection of kindred ties recurred to him. And he did think it ominous, that the dead, and not the living, should be the theme of discourse. For, amid the licence of his career, the grim plant, Superstition, had grown up along with his vices—like a fungus underground—in darkness and malaria. He again said, "We must repair the church;" and hastened towards the structure.

The steward opened the door with difficulty, for the wood was swelled by damp. The edifice was now considered unsafe, and no duty had been done in it for a year. Rats and cobwebs reigned there in profusion; owls had built in the tower; bats made free with the old gables in the summer; and, whilst the house was fresh decorated with marbles and pictures, the church was fast decaying for want of a little mortar and lead. Lord Ravenspur observed, "This is all very bad!" and moved on towards the chancel.

Here was placed, and yet not placed, for it had merely been unpacked, a superb *basso relievo*, sculptured at Rome, and dedicated to the memory of the late lord, by a son whose only act of duty it was. Lord Ravenspur hastened towards it; as he went, his foot struck against a loose stone; he stopped short, and asked of the steward, "How was this? And what—where—why," he faltered, "does it happen there is a stone loose here? Is not the family vault somewhere hereabouts?"

"My lord," said the steward—he paused, and the echoes of his voice resounded amid the high arched tombs and banners. "It was opened, as you may remember, when Miss Isabel died, and your lordship may please to recollect that the inquest——"

"Be silent, sir!" exclaimed Lord Ravenspur, interrupting him; "do you mean to—to taunt me with that business?" He spoke with a fury so unusual to him, that the old steward stood aghast.

"The stone shall be fixed forthwith," he said, humbly; "but your lordship may recollect that my Lady Ravenspur had her objections to the interment, and that——"

"Do not mention her name!" cried Lord Ravenspur, his fit of passion, which had been subsiding, reviving at this lengthy explanation. "Can we get out at this door here?" he added, more calmly, pointing to a low postern in the chancel, "without—without going all through that infernal damp church?"

The steward opened the door in silence, thinking, "what is become of his lordship's zeal for the Established Church;" he was struck, however, and grieved—for he was a kind, faithful old servant—at the pallid hue of his lordship's face, and at his demeanour; for Lord Ravenspur gave a sort of gasp, rather than a sigh, and said, as he uplifted his withered countenance to the skies, as if to inhale the free air, "Thank the stars, I am out of that place; I hope it will not have given me a fit of ague."

"Your lordship used to be afraid of nothing," observed the steward, as he followed his young master over the grave-stones again, into the pleasure-grounds.

But the enthusiasm for change seemed to have vanished—to have been entombed with the buried. Lord Ravenspur took but little notice of the fresh scene through which he returned, and scarcely spoke to the steward until they drew near the house. Then, looking back at him for a moment, he said, in a very low and hurried tone, "There was an ugly sort of a pond in the pleasure-grounds somewhere: they have filled it up, I hope?"

"They have so, my lord," replied the old man, bowing, "by your lordship's desire, when——"

But Lord Ravenspur had turned from him, gained the steps, and again stood on the platform, and again faced his tenantry, and bowed to their cheers, and his filial duty was admired for having gone, the very first moment of his arrival, to inspect his father's monument; whereas, it was, in fact, the pomp and pride of art which had taken his lordship to that grim spot.

The day drew on, and, in the afternoon, another carriage and four drew up, and the respectable figure of Sir Henry Aylmer alighted. He proceeded immediately to his dressing-room, and at four appeared, in the full-dress then required for dinner, in the drawing-room. He was received with elegant cordiality by Lord Ravenspur. Sir Henry was a man of a kind heart, of unblemished reputation, of excellent intentions, able and well-informed, but devoid of that nice discrimination which guard people from mistakes in society. To say that he wanted *tact* was too strong a phrase; in fact, a person who wants *tact* deserves transportation; but he had all the *tact* which practised manners give, but not an ounce of it where the delicate, occult emotions of the heart are concerned.

He shook his cousin heartily by the hand: "Welcome home, dear Ravenspur! I hope you find your nice place looking well; I have made free with you, and been here shooting several times. Ah! I wrote you word, so I did—what a cordial welcome you will have here—eh?"

"Yes—I dare say," said Lord Ravenspur, faintly.

"So I hear you have been to the church already?—nice old church! I wonder how many generations of your lordship's—I may have the honour of saying of *our*—family lie there? Let me see, who was the last—your father?"

Lord Ravenspur almost groaned a "no," but he aroused himself to turn the conversation.

The roads were, in those days, a vast resource: accidents, footpads, wheels coming off, horses falling, post-boys tipsy, were, to polite society, that stock in trade which is now supplied by being too late for the train; or having a friend whose first cousin's wife's sister had an eye put out in the last Eastern Counties' collision but twenty; or doing impossible feats in an impossible time, unless you study Bradshaw, (which seems to me *the* work of the day); or the merits of railroads in general, compared with travelling by good honest stage-coaches, a subject of most universal fertility, never yet satisfactorily concluded.

So Lord Ravenspur got upon the roads; he anathematised them all, Continental and Insular, from beginning to end, sparing not even the last stage to Haskreton; and he spoke with a force that seemed to shake his spare frame, and to im-

press upon Sir Henry that it was necessary to turn that subject. "Some screw loose here," thought the calm man, at first; then "he has been robbed, perhaps;" lastly, the "surveyor of the roads has, maybe, offended his lordship." So he went on with his usual "oh — ah — very true — indeed!" throwing in as alkali to the acid an occasional "that's a strong opinion, rather; I differ from you as to the mode of repairing the evil;" and then, the storm of words subsiding, he returned to his first theme.

"By the way, we were talking of the church just now: was there not something rather singular about poor Isabel Tracey's death?—an accident, or—bless my soul!—the idea's a horrid one—I shall fancy I see the poor girl's ghost, I declare, in these long corridors and chambers." Sir Henry stopped short, for he was struck by a sudden change in the countenance of his host. It was as if some mental tic douloureux had taken possession of him. But it passed away in an instant, or, rather, was controlled by the mastery of long-sustained dissimulation.

The conversation, however, now turned upon the subject of apparitions. Sir Henry, free in conscience, easy in mind, of a straightforward, practical piety, and wholly devoid of imagination, repudiated all the various testimonies which had been adduced in favour of the return of spirits to this nether sphere. To his surprise, Lord Ravenspur, whilst he wholly threw aside the great truths of Revelation, and confessed that he regarded religion as a mere state-engine, faltered when he touched upon the possibility of ghostly apparitions. He did not positively confess to a belief in it; he rather treated the subject with his usual levity and scepticism; but he adduced various instances of well-authenticated ghost stories; "traditions," he said, "or, it might be, inventions; but still they were established on strong evidence." He spoke with his usual ability; he related these indubitable facts, as he termed them, with clearness, and with that absence of exaggeration which is the great secret of narrative, His voice, now low, was still melodious and varied; his choice of language excellent, for it was elegant, but not pedantic; his countenance lighted up as he spoke. The evening passed quickly away, and Sir Henry, looking at his watch, at midnight, declared that he had not, for a long time, passed so pleasant an evening. "By-the-by," he added, recollecting himself, "we ought to have talked over poor Lady Ravenspur's affair this evening. She is still intent upon commencing proceedings, is she not?"

Lord Ravenspur shook his head. "Yes, and in spite of all the generosity and forbearance that has been shown to her

ladyship—and she *will* go on, I believe, to the end. Such is the ingratitude of the world."

"Well," returned Sir Henry, taking up his bed-candlestick, "you have honoured me with your confidence; and remember, that if I can be of any use—do you, in short, think it possible to accommodate matters?"

"Indeed, I do not. She is inveterate, and I am the victim of the most abominable persecution that ever man was subjected to. Besides, I do not wish it. If her ladyship, upon the strength of certain indiscretions, which every man is liable to, chooses to seek for what she calls relief by divorce, she may. I shall be free, perhaps, to make another and a wiser choice: I was, in her case, sacrificed to my circumstances."

He spoke with the air of a martyr; and, in fact, Lord Ravenspur considered himself as a very injured man. That which the ill-natured world called truth, he stigmatised as calumny; and he characterised the proceedings of his wife as persecution, she being unreasonable enough to exact the observance of the marriage vow: and he had his partizans. His high-bred relations, more especially, who had been scandalised at his marrying one whom they termed a low-born woman, waived some scruples of conscience, and took his part on that account.

Lady Ravenspur had, at this time, made considerable progress in her suit: strange to say, Lord Ravenspur, who, every one thought, had not a grain of character left, nor the slightest right to feel obloquy, was sore at the exposures in the newspapers. He felt deeply the odium of the hour; he resented, as a proud man, the exhibition of his private affairs to every plebeian eye. At this time, he formed a resolution to retrace his steps, and live respectably; his state of health was favourable to a regularity of life which became almost imperatively necessary. He renewed a correspondence with some of those numerous connections which the intermarriages of the higher classes ensure to the nobly born. They made common cause at his bidding, and hastened to rally round him on his return to Haskreton.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HALL IN ITS GLORY AGAIN.

Where was Mr. Aylmer? He had recovered, it was said, from a dangerous fever; some hinted that it had been a brain

fever, the result of intemperance; others, that it was merely rheumatic. He was never, however, all agreed, to be the "same man again"—and he never *was*.

It was not that his heart was changed, or his principles reformed, or that one honest resolution ever (pleading for him, perhaps, hereafter) visited—an angel visit—his degraded soul. It was that the power to sin was gone; the mind, far more expansive and solid in its qualities than that of Lord Ravenspur, had lost its energies; for months after that fever, he was deaf and stupid; then light broke slowly upon the benighted, but not *then* extinguished intellect; his hearing returned, but an apathy had succeeded to the ardour of his vicious youth.

A gay circle was, however, soon assembled at Haskreton, and among them Mr. Aylmer took his place—heavy, dreary, joyless, but still liked—always pitied, because the courtesy of the gentleman had survived the downfall of the *man*.

Haskreton Hall now presented a very different appearance to its former lugubrious aspect. Carriages-and-four, preceded by footmen with horns and torches, were seen arriving daily; plumed ladies, in scarlet riding-dresses, stepped out with their husbands or brothers; ladies' maids and valets might be noticed, occasionally, innocently strolling about the village; the parlour-pew at the parish church was filled; and rumours of a ball were circulated, greatly to the advantage of the noble owner of the hall. The Smiths and Pattesons called of course: they had said for the last fortnight that they did not believe half the stories against Lord Ravenspur: for who can think ill of a man who gives balls; and what has the world to do with disputes between man and wife?

In the thick of all this local agitation, it so fell out that Major and Mrs. Topham and their daughters, arrived to pay a long-proposed visit at the manor-house. They came to turn all the quiet and contentment of that abode into disorder; but they were received by kind and hospitable hearts, and little was thought of inconvenience, racket, or any other evil, by William or his sisters.

Mrs. Topham entered on the scene in tears. "My poor dear brother! Well, he's gone! I put on my mourning, Lilia dear, just to come in; but you'll excuse me saying, 'tis quite worn out, and must be put off. (It seemed, indeed, very likely to take that step of its own accord) Well, dear girls, you'll be glad of a motherly person among you. We've got leave for a month—the only bit of kindness they have ever shown us at the Horse Guards. Ah, how well I remember this room! It was your dear mother's own parlour, Lilia: there, in

that cupboard in the recess, she kept her best china; she had her tambour-frame where Honora sits; and she always sat, or latterly lay, just in that warm corner where you are. She was a long time afflicted, and my brother never would believe but what she would get well. I fancy I hear her cough at this moment—you're her very image, Lilia. What a sad thing it is," she added, lowering her voice, "Honora's being dark; I wanted to show her, poor thing! the new silks we smuggled when we were quartered on Portland Island; but that's impossible. And where, pray, may I ask, is Mr. Aylmer?"

Lilia looked away, and allowed her brother to answer the inquiry.

"He is, I believe," said William, "at the hall; but my sisters don't like to visit there, although, I confess, I am under such obligations to his lordship, that I regret it."

"Undoubtedly!" cried Mrs. Topham, without considering in the least the merits of the case; "and we are told he has great influence in the War Office, too; and, to be candid, which is my way, we are come here on purpose, for one reason—family reasons, of course, first—to cultivate his acquaintance."

"His character," Lilia began hastily to say——

"My dear! when did you ever hear of a lord having a character? and, besides, with a coronet, it's scarcely wanted;—and I've danced with the present Lord Ravenspur;—I don't believe he's so much younger than myself—on the anniversary of his late lordship's natal day; and I can't conceive it so very much a duty, under all those circumstances, to talk of his lordship's character."

"How his wife can go on as she does," said Sophy, "I cannot conceive; most of our officers think she must be mad."

"What did she marry him for," cried Caroline, "if she wishes to get rid of him so soon?"

"It may be an awkward story," observed Mrs. Topham; "but then look at the Captain—only wants a little interest to get his majority; I can't bear to hear scandal of any one."

The captain, who always sang the chorus to his wife's songs, was glancing over the county paper. "It is reported that Lord Ravenspur proposes to give a ball on the 23rd."

"Oh, then," said Mrs. Topham, "that settles the question at once! I am very glad I brought my ruby China crape, which clings, I assure you, Lilia, and sits beautifully; I'm another person in it; and Sophy and Caroline have only to make up their new lenos, bordered with rows of their own painting on white velvet, roses—and what, Sophy?"

"A composition-flower, mamma; purple centre and yellow leaves—no name to it—my own idea."

"And the captain in his uniform—a soldier's always in place. Who have you here recruiting, Lilia, hereabouts?"

Lilia was obliged to confess her ignorance; and the entrance of a neat and plentiful supper at this epoch directed Mrs. Topham's interests to another subject. She became enthusiastic on the subject of roast fowls and cheese-cakes, was in ecstacy with her dear home-brewed ale of former days, and lauded, until bed-time, a silver flagon of elderberry wine.

Lilia was glad to show her aunt to her room, for she had been secretly forming a resolution to enlist her in her cause, to impart to this kind, but thoughtless relative all her scruples and her aversions, and then to rest upon her sympathy and advice.

She closed the door; and placing her aunt in an old-fashioned easy chair, by the fireside, began, "Aunt, I have something to say to you."

"Make haste, then, dear, for I am very sleepy," replied Mrs. Topham, taking off an auburn *front*, simulating rich and clustering curls. "Pray does William ever think of getting married? Is it that? Now, mind, Lilia, I have no views for Sophy or Caroline, for cousins, in my opinion, had better leave matrimony alone."

"Ah!" returned Lilia, "William thinks only how to make us comfortable, and has, I believe, given up all thoughts of matrimony for himself; but that, dear aunt, is not what I have to say to you. I want your advice."

"Very natural, dear; and I hope it is about some chance you have of settling yourself," said Mrs. Topham, curling up, as she spoke, that frontlet which now lay upon her lap.

Lilia then disburdened to her aunt the secret which had lain heavily at her heart—the insult offered to her by Mr. Aylmer. She told the tale with much hurry and trepidation, cautioning her aunt, at every break of her narrative, never to breathe it again, and challenging her advice and matronly judgment on the subject. It was evidently a great effort thus to impart an event which had so shocked the delicacy of the narrator. Her colour came and went, and she concluded by earnestly entreating Mrs. Topham not to resent, ostensibly an affront which had now been suffered to go unavenged for two years.

She finished, and Mrs. Topham, looking at her with a kind but surprised air, answered, "I cannot see, my dear, why you didn't marry him; you've lost your chance now. As to the rest, la! my dear, think nothing more about it. I shouldn't

give it a thought. 'Twas as common in my days for young ladies to go off with their partners after balls, after they had got to the bottom of a country-dance, as it was to take your breakfast. Besides, no blame could be cast on *you*. You didn't run off with Mr. Aylmer, he ran off with you. I think you are wrong to give the subject a moment's consideration. If you but knew what things happen in our corps every day!"

Lilia was dumb with astonishment at this light mode of treating that which had pressed so often upon her own spirits, and which she still resented with all the dignity of a gentlewoman. She entreated her aunt again not to disclose it, even to the captain.

"Lord bless your soul!" cried Mrs. Topham, "I should never do any such thing. Depend upon it, my dear, what you have said to me goes in at one ear and out of the other. Sophy could tell you just such another affair that happened between Captain Edwards of the Blues, and a young Irish lady, when we were in depôt."

With this consolatory information, the conversation, which had cost such tremor to poor Lilia, was closed that night. Still her mind was not at ease upon the subject, more especially since Mr. Aylmer's return to the neighbourhood. She trembled lest he should again presume to insult her, and almost wished that she had made the former one known, and demanded an apology. The instincts of youth proved, in this instance, truer monitors than the advice of what was falsely called experience—confounding experience with age.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAW'S DELAY.

A GROUP of four persons were gathered round a table, over oceans of parchment and waves of writing-paper. First, there was the lawyer, with his unimpassioned, dry-as-dust physiognomy, his figure rounded by affluence and consequent good cheer—fed, in truth, upon the woes and passions of society. How fat he became upon the harvest of a disputed will! how blessed in the results of conjugal infelicity! how joyous in a squabble between the Church and the laity! These were all pleasant things, but perhaps a divorce-bill was as salubrious as any.

Next came the ample form and downcast visage of Mr.

Pratt; a wrinkle or two was marked on that round, pale forehead, and his eyes had an anxious expression. Still the humble and the benign were the characteristics of the whole man, and his plump, white hand was extended in the act of addressing Mr. Crab, the lawyer. Crab, I shall call him, in ignorance of his real name, not in regard to his temper, but as a gentle reference to his mode of proceeding, for he seemed, like many of his vocation, to have the art of going backwards; your affairs were always retrograding in his hands. The longer you employed him, the farther you were from the point; and law, which was, it may be presumed, originally intended to decide contending interests, appeared, in Mr. Crab's mode of practice, peculiarly fitted to give birth to obstacles.

Next to him sat Lady Ravenspur, her face pinched up in a poke bonnet, and a veil drawn half way over that poke. Her features were drawn with intense suffering at the moment of which we write, and bitter disappointment weighed down her head almost till it touched the table. Near her was Miss Hartley, holding a deep-blue smelling-bottle; but her officious hand was waved off by Lady Ravenspur.

This sad-looking party sat in a chamber in Chancery Lane; and, I suppose, to any reasonable being that name will convey all that the human intellect can conceive of dust and smoke; of a dusty, ignoble gloom; of noise, without cheerfulness, in the front of the house, and quiet without repose in the back. Every one knows the heart-ache, the tremulous haste, with which one enters those dens, and the head-ache, and the slow step one comes out withal. And what made it more provoking, was to see Mr. Crab looking so well all the time; whilst a massive gold ring glittered upon such a fine, fat, white finger, as he pointed to a certain line upon a long sheet of parchment.

"There, there, my lady," he said, emphatically, "there's the bridge we cannot break down; you have condoned."

Lady Ravenspur sank in her chair. She knew that something had gone wrong, but she knew not the full import of the expression.

"Sir," she gasped out, "I know not what you mean? I always acted according to my conscience; I always conducted myself with the most perfect propriety."

"I make no doubt of that," returned Mr. Crab; "but, unluckily, consciences will not do in law."

Mr. Pratt held up his hands in amazement and virtuous sorrow.

"No, madam; no, my lady; there's the advantage the

enemy have against us; and there's the impediment which blocks out redress."

Lady Ravenspur slowly repeated to herself the word, "condoned! condoned!" that word which signifies forgiveness, on the part of a wife, of the greatest insult that man can offer to her; for which, by law, she is debarred from redress for similar injuries, even if they be repeated until the spirits are broken by shame and anguish.

Mr. Pratt meekly asked, "In what instance her ladyship's Christian temper had been so visibly displayed?"

Mr. Crab re-read the document. He turned an expressive look towards the clergyman, and said, "In the case of Isabel Tracey, who, as you may remember ——"

"I do remember," replied Mr. Pratt, hurriedly, and looking at Lady Ravenspur.

That unfortunate individual had again sunk back in her chair, and she seemed now thankful for the smelling-bottle proffered by Miss Hartley.

All was now at an end. Litigations, which had been going on for the last two years, under various and complicated aspects, were now, indeed, ended by the decree which makes it a penalty for woman to forgive. She must visit on her husband the first offence; she must be relentless; she must have no heart, no hope of reclaiming the delinquent, if she ever wishes to be released from the sinning one, when her position shall have become intolerable to her. Such is the law: the *most* amiable have suffered from its effects, and have experienced how much more fortunate are the harsh, than the gentle in this world. How much wiser are the children of Mammon than the children of Light!

Lady Ravenspur remained for some time silent, tearless—her face covered—her hand in that of Miss Hartley. Her friends were surprised at her calmness. After a time, Miss Hartley became alarmed. She requested Mr. Crab to see if her ladyship's *vis-à-vis* was waiting, and, having gained the desired intelligence that it was, she hurried Lady Ravenspur into the carriage.

Lady Ravenspur spoke not during the whole of the drive; the first genuine feelings of her existence seemed to be aroused, for herself. She struggled, nevertheless, with her mental and physical sufferings; a certain pride, which shut out sympathy, and said, in mute terms, to her friends, "Pity me not," sustained, and enabled her to appear at dinner.

It was a cold repast in every sense: the dinner, tepid; the wine, thin; the fish, consumptive-looking smelts, vanished in a twinkling; the scraggy mutton defied the assaults of the

keenest appetites; whilst a handful of mashed potatoes, and a tart which seemed intended for three, but which served five, seemed a sort of insult to the hungry; the taper-stemmed, thimble-full wine glasses, half filled, were a fitting accompaniment to this infinitesimal dinner, concluded by a dessert which had appeared and re-appeared, and had now that determined look of the cupboard which was acquired by a long seclusion. But all passed off well; and Miss Hartley was even audacious enough to talk of the hospitality of her ladyship.

The conversation at Lady Ravenspur's table, Miss Hartley observed, was of the highest order. Of course, invectives against the sinning came under that description. It was the thing to speak in dark hints of the adverse party, to moralise upon the wickedness of the world, and to add in any little details that could be gathered of Lord Ravenspur's very questionable career, his lordship going by the name of a "certain person."

Miss Hartley had received letters that very day from Haskreton. "Only think," she looked round at the lean footboy as she spoke, "a 'certain person' is repairing the church at Haskreton House;—so some people, you see, turn sanctimonious."

"Shocking!" said Mrs. Howard.

"Incomprehensible!" murmured Mr. Pratt.

"My dear friends," observed Lady Ravenspur, faintly, "let us hope for his conversion; that some unseen influence——" she sighed, and held her handkerchief to her eyes.

"How amiable!" cried Miss Hartley; "but I differ from your ladyship, for I hear," she added, in a tone of deep mystery and horror, "that a 'certain person' is going, on a certain day, to give a ball." She glanced round at the small footboy as she spoke; he was gazing open-mouthed, as if to swallow her words, but no ray of comprehension gleamed from his eyes.

"A ball!" exclaimed Mrs. Howard; "bless me!

"A ball!" reiterated Mr. Pratt, in a tone of deep reprehension, as if he had heard of a projected assassination; "I mourn indeed for the neighbourhood which has such revelries to corrupt it."

"A ball!" said Lady Ravenspur; "I knew him bad, but knew not he would come to this."

"Dancing," remarked Mr. Pratt, never raising his eyes from the tablecloth, and partly turning to Mrs. Howard, "is manifestly the invention of the father of lies and depravity."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Howard, innocently. "And pray, which of the Fathers might that be?"

Mr. Pratt was too much absorbed in his own feelings to hear her, and Miss Hartley, in the meantime, went on.

"The poor unfortunate man—that 'certain person,'" she said, glancing timorously around her, "is supported by certain misguided relatives, I hear."

"Of course," interrupted Mr. Pratt ; "sin always prospers for a time."

"Ah, so it does! How very true!" cried Miss Hartley, whilst Mrs. Howard shook her head. "Well, Lady Charlotte Courtenay is there ; she who never condescended to visit Haskreton whilst—I mean she whom my lady never would invite," she added, checking herself, "though Lady Charlotte was dying to know my lady. She is a very worldly, unsatisfactory sort of person, though she does not hold herself cheap ; and I hear a certain person is eaten up with her." Mrs. Howard again shook her head, and Mr. Pratt again observed, "incomprehensible."

"Then there is Sir Henry Aylmer, whom the world speaks of as your future son-in-law, Mrs Howard ; and there's General Herbert, and Lady Paulet, and Lord and Lady Wingrove, and I dare say other unthinking people, all at a 'certain person's' house just now." She looked round at Lady Ravenspur for her encouragement, but her patroness was languid and indifferent. Sententious sayings and trite nothings died away upon her lips : the iron had entered her soul.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DEATH AND GAIETY.

Lady Charlotte Courtenay, whose present adherence to Lord Ravenspur was the theme of so much comment, was one of those impositions on society which one is led by the stream of opinion to worship, under false pretences ; she was a short, fair woman, with tolerable features, whom her own conviction, that of her husband and family, the united tribute of their votaries, and the generous epithets of county newspapers, conspired to uphold as a beauty. She was a quick, shrewd, audacious woman, of little education and great valour, whom her own certainty, and the daunted humility of others, upraised into a wit.

Mr. Courtenay was a man of composure, who held the tenet that his wife could do no wrong. He believed all that she thought of herself, and esteemed himself only too happy in

being the husband of such a piece of perfection—a felicity which he had now enjoyed ten years.

Such were the leading characters at the hall, and to these Lord Ravenspur earnestly wished to add two persons who had long been absent from his saloons—Mr. and Miss Hope. He justly considered them as the most estimable and influential persons in the neighbourhood, but found, however, to his mortification, that they were absent from Hopewood. It was particularly essential to him, just at this period, to collect around him the suffrages of the county. *Character* was his present passion; and to this was united a sort of conservative spirit, new to him; he became anxious to retrieve his affairs, and restore his house and dependencies to a state of bygone splendour.

There was one person who looked on that remarkable scene which the career of Lord Ravenspur presented with a cool but kind judgment, who reasoned calmly, but felt warmly for the being whom she beheld wretched in the midst of fortune, and sinking unnoticed and unconscious to a premature grave. This placid observer was one of those middle-aged, steady, sensible, pleasing women, who often acquires a great influence over the most reckless men. She was stiff, plain, and of a very ordinary taste in dress. Her conversation was far from fluent; but her gentle discrimination, her grave kindness, and, above all, the absence of self, made her a favourite of Lord Ravenspur. This was his kinswoman, Miss Wingrove, the only unmarried daughter of Lord and Lady Wingrove, who had now rallied round their relative. Such is the outline of those personages who were collected at Haskreton. I must not omit Sir Henry Aylmer, who was, notwithstanding his boasted philosophy, evidently uneasy at Lilia's having declined all invitations to the hall, and more especially at her resolute objection to be present at the ball. He now joined the consultations about that event languidly, and often paired off with Miss Wingrove, taking her long walks down the village, and generally contriving to find himself in the proximity of the manor-house.

At length, the long-anticipated evening arrived; the avenue to the house was thronged with carriages; the flambeaux threw up their light upon the summit of the old elms; the villagers were all turned out as for a holiday; the church bells rang as if they had anything to do with it; the hall was lined with powdered servants, in white liveries; every neighbouring town, every village, as well as every tenant-farmer on the estate, had been ransacked for those solid provisions which the practice of our revered ancestors deemed fit for their final

repast; and dishes in which apoplexy lurked, legal poisons, and condiments, handmaidens to gout, were spread on tables at which each guest might have a seat, and make himself comfortable for any unlimited period. The saloons were now displayed in all their splendour, a little bygone. But the company were not fastidious: blooming country belles, who had never beheld anything more elegant than their father's ancient panelled drawing-rooms, were vociferous in their praise, which their parents remembered with interest, that such and such rooms were refurnished to receive the lovely and lamented mother of their host.

The company were all assembled, and had passed in review before Lady Charlotte Courtenay, and had walked about until expressions of delight fell faintly from the youngest, and some hints of being tired before the dance began were heard from those who had been "out" some years; and the papas gaped and wondered whether they had not ordered their horses too late, and the mammas became a little abusive of trains and boddices they had praised an hour ago; and still Lord Ravenspur did not appear. At last, somewhat hurried, and with an absent air, Sir Henry Aylmer entered the room, and desired that the minuet should begin; but scarcely had the whole assembly been set in motion, scarcely had meaning glances, which were only the figure, and reverences, which merely meant to be in tune, occupied the assembly, when he disappeared, taking with him Miss Wingrove.

Meantime, let us follow Lord Ravenspur into his dressing-room. There, before a large looking-glass, encompassed in folds of delicate muslin, sat the faded fine gentleman of the last century whilst the company were arriving. Carriages were pouring in, and names were shouted out, and footmen were running, and horses trampling; and still *he*, the Amphitryon of the place, was *en déshabille*. He was looking listlessly at the shrunk but still well-proportioned limb, which his valet was clothing in a silk stocking, pinked to excess; whilst a pair of dainty shoes, garnished with diamond buckles, lay ready to complete the important costume of the leg, that test, in former days, of a man's pretensions to beauty. But no pleasureable excitements of gratified vanity seemed to accompany this operation; it was often deferred by his lordship's throwing himself back in his chair and yawning, whilst he muttered to himself, "Am I, then, tied to her for ever? A plague upon the lawyers! they did their duty; but why did they not let her off? Never was a man so cruelly injured; that woman will be the death of me!" The valet still went on gravely, as at a funeral, but unremittingly, when he could;

but one foot was still in the red morocco slipper, when a packet was brought into the room.

"Immediate!" said the servant, presenting it, and retreating reverently to the door.

"'Immediate!' What can it be? I am sure I have had enough of vexation for to-day. Tell Wilson to come here; let him open it and answer it."

The lacquey retired, and Lord Ravenspur fell into a reverie. Nothing in the course of his life had ever annoyed him more than Lady Ravenspur's proceedings against him. They had commenced just when he meant to be respectable. He was one of those who was blinded to all publicity except that which was circulated in print. Then it found its way into his very heart.

As the affair went on he had become, however, reconciled to it, and had even resolved in his mind how he should employ his liberty; in short, he thought of marrying again, and proximity, the indifference displayed, old sentiments of admiration rekindled, and the still blooming loveliness of a certain object drew his regards, if so they may be called, towards the Manor-house. His inclinations, never controlled, always impetuous, though transient, raised in an instant—though in their effects fatal for years to those who were their object—had centred in the retiring, coy, almost disdainful Lilia Howard.

He, therefore, cursed the tie which still bound him, and was employed in that way when the old steward entered the room. The valet was then desired to retire for a few moments.

"Wilson," said his lordship, "here's a packet which comes express. It will require an answer, of course; you must answer it. I cannot think what it will be about, except to tell me, perhaps, that my town-house is burnt down, or that my banker has failed. Misfortunes never come single: I dare say it is a misfortune. I am the most unhappy man living!"

"Your lordship is—your lordship's jocular," said the slow steward, as he opened the letter. "This letter is sealed with black, my lord."

"Oh, the death of some old aunt! put it in the fire."

"No, my lord, not so; but it will keep till to-morrow, in course," said the steward, respectfully. "Your lordship may happen to be disturbed to-night."

"No, no; I am not easily disturbed, William, at *any* one's death. I shouldn't be," looking archly at the steward, "even at my Lady Ravenspur's."

The steward gave a short, respectful laugh. "Ah, my lord! my lady will see us both out, please God. Well, this letter is sealed with black, and has a black edge!"

"Read it, then," said his lordship.

The steward obeyed him; he saw somewhat rapidly, as *pro forma*, the first words; but his voice was audible enough when these expressions met his eye,—"And, on Wednesday night, the symptoms of her ladyship's disease became urgent; human aid was resorted to; and the best medical skill was called in, in the course of the twenty-four hours preceding her ladyship's death, which took place in the presence of myself and other afflicted friends."

Here an exclamation from Lord Ravenspur checked the progress of the steward, who was going on at an ambling pace.

"Gracious Heavens! it is impossible! Lady Ravenspur dead?"

"I was afeard," said the steward, humbly, "that your lordship would be shocked at this bad news."

"Bad news? I fear it is too good to be true," cried Lord Ravenspur, aroused from the apathy, which was cured as by a charm. "Too good to be true!" He took the paper from the hands of Wilson.

"Yes, she is dead, sure enough, 'she sleeps in peace,' says my reverend correspondent, my old friend Pratt, I observe; the only time she has ever been in peace, I should think. Well, I am sure I forgive her all her injuries—that is, all mine, for this one act. But bless me! what am I to do? here are the tabors and tambourins playing as if they were mad, and here am I—what shall I do? We can't offend decorum, Wilson."

"If you please, my lord," said the old man, with a tone between simplicity and humour, "it would not be for the first time; had not your lordship best send for Sir Henry Aylmer, who's the properest man at handling these matters that I know."

"Ah yes—certainly. You are sure that's Pratt's handwriting, Wilson? and he has been with my lady—I mean the late Lady Ravenspur?"

"Yes, to my knowledge."

"Well, then, fetch Sir Henry; of course, Wilson, you'll say what is proper on my part—that I am deeply afflicted," whispered the peer, with a sly look.

"In course, my lord."

The steward vanished, and the valet resumed his assaults upon his lordship's hair, which he seized, then turned back and clubbed, and still went to its work the powder-puff. But in that brief interval, before Sir Henry arrived, Lord Ravenspur reviewed the circumstances of his present condition. His quick mind ran over all the advantages bequeathed to him

by his wife's death. Her property, in which he had a life interest; then his freedom; dreams of restored respectability, without the penalties of a loathsome tie; of youth and grace adorning those halls whence came now the joyous sounds of music; of something like love blessing his home, for the worst men wish for *that;*—of children, heirs to an estate rapidly becoming unencumbered; of renewed health, perhaps——but there a sigh broke the reverie, a palpitation stopped those charms. "If I live," muttered the nobleman, recollecting that Lady Ravenspur had appeared far the stronger of the two.

Sir Henry came in, at that moment, with a face full of condolences.

"How are your, dear Ravenspur? considering that you were not altogether comfortable with poor Lady Ravenspur, I do hope that this is not, altogether, such a very great shock, is it? By the way, shall your valet retire? you will not want him now."

"Yes—pray," replied Lord Ravenspur.

Sir Henry closed the door after the servant. "We may now speak our minds—this *is* a relief."

"It is," returned Lord Ravenspur, emphatically.

"How does her property stand?"

"Why, I believe, I have a life interest in it; but, if she has any poor relations, they shall be provided for," said Lord Ravenspur; "but now, what is to be done with all these people? If I do not appear, without a reason, I shall offend them; if I do appear I shall offend decorum."

"Has the event transpired in the house?" inquired Sir Henry.

"I am not sure; but, suppose you ask Miss Wingrove to give us her advice; she is the very pink of etiquette. Let us summon her."

Sir Henry complied, and soon—the valet reappearing, meantime, and the lace coat being put on, and the garniture completed—Miss Wingrove was prevailed upon that there could be no impropriety in entering her cousin's dressing-room. To say the truth, she was not addicted to that species of extra propriety which generally shows far more weakness of mind than real modesty.

"My dear Esther," said Lord Ravenspur, extending his hand to her, "you have heard the news; I am supposed to be in deep sorrow; but you——"

"I perfectly understand," said Miss Wingrove, "that you can't grieve much; still, it is an awful event! What complaint carried poor Lady Ravenspur off?"

"Why, I have been reading Pratt's letter; he pretends to

say of a broken heart ; but that can't be—she *had* no heart ; but, of course, it will all be laid to me."

"Very probably," said Miss Wingrove ; "you have had other things attributed to you, perhaps, as false."

"Thank you, dear Esther. How well that head-dress suits you ! But what is to be done about the ball ? "

"Why, I think," said Esther, "as the company are assembled, and as nothing has, I hear, transpired of the contents of that letter, and as you were certainly before very anxious to get rid of your wife, and she equally so of you, and since you cannot pretend to grieve, *I* think you had better hush up the news till to-morrow, and just walk through the rooms to prevent people going away discontented, You see, a ball at Haskreton is an event."

"Ah, it is, certainly ! " cried Lord Ravenspur ; "I will come : and to-morrow some quires of black-edged paper can be got, and the intelligence circulated ; we can then be lavish in our expressions ; that will be easily managed."

"Very easily ; so, my dear cousin, I will say you are coming instantly."

"Cousins ! are we really cousins ? " said Lord Ravenspur, if struck by the word ; for the event had shaken him, and his hand trembled as he grasped the bouquets prepared by his valet.

"Yes," returned Miss Wingrove, quietly ; "the same relation as poor Isabel Tracey, only *I* on the mother's side, and she on the fathers."

"Poor Isabel ! " thought Lord Ravenspur, as he put on his gloves, "she persecuted *her ;* " the remembrance gave a cheerful elasticity to his step ; "she *did*, and why should her death strike, or startle me ? " he thought, as he entered the well-lighted drawing-room.

The first minuets had just ceased as his lordship gracefully walked up the room, bowing to all, but stopping at intervals to speak to some particular person ; among these was William Howard, who, clad in his very best attire, and looking much ashamed of himself on that account, stood back among the elderly gentlemen, among whom, from an over-refinement of modesty, he placed himself.

Lord Ravenspur pressed his hand, saying, in a low voice, "It is a real vexation to me that your sister could not be persuaded to honour us with her presence. Believe me, there is not a friend here that I more prize than yourself."

"My lord," returned William, never raising his eyes from the floor, "You honour—you overpower me."

"Come as often to see me as you can," added Lord Ravenspur, again pressing his hand, and passing on.

William was too much depressed by a sense of unworthiness to look up for some time after his lordship had moved away. When he did, he addressed the person nearest to him, who happened to be Mr. Aylmer. That unfortunate being had somewhat amused, somewhat shocked, the room with his eccentricities. He was dressed exquisitely, in the point-device style of the day—every item well considered; his hair pomatumed to a nicety, and his delicate hands and feet were admired by all the ladies; but, whilst his features were still handsome, their expression was wholly changed. His eye was weak and wandering, and he walked about the room incessantly, as if looking for something that he had lost; he spoke not voluntarily, and, as if conscious of some incipient failing of intellect, answered every question in monosyllables.

William addressed him, thinking to please this, the partial relative of the noble host.

"How gracious his lordship is; how well he plays his part!"

Aylmer's restless eye was turned towards him with a slow look of recognition. "Yes, yes," he said, hurriedly, "he plays his part well—you'll find that," and walked away.

"Poor idiot!" thought the meek William, a little affronted by this abrupt reply; "his friends ought to control him."

Lord Ravenspur, meantime, made the circuit of the company. His face was very pale when he began this fatiguing round, but it now became flushed, and had the appearance of being painted, it was of a pink, unnatural hue. Miss Wingrove quietly remarked it, saying to herself, "He does feel Lady Ravenspur's death, too—he did my cousin Isabel's." As Lord Ravenspur came round to the place where she was standing, she said, in a low tone, "You have done enough now; had you not better retire for the night?"

He answered her that the evening was but just begun, and, in his sense, it was not. When, after hours of those funereal processions called minuets, the company went to supper, then to their carriages, Lord Ravenspur, attended by Mr. Aylmer and a few gentlemen, took refuge in a small room at the extremity of the house, where they drank until morning dawned upon them, and then his lordship was carried to his room, one pace more being shortened between him and the grave by this carousal. Such were the enjoyments of those days.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN EVENING AT HOME.

Lilia had resisted every entreaty, and remained at home that night. She presided, however, disinterestedly, over the toilets; pinned up Mrs. Topham's turban, a complication of some yards of white gauze, fastened up in front with a pearl spray, in the form of a crescent, and richly elaborated with loops and tassels.

She was the architect of a tower of ribands, lace, flowers, and hair, on the summit of the two Miss Tophams, who, in the language of the day, thus erected "heads" on the natural head. She had also the tying of the Captain's bag, and the task of consoling him for the tarnished state of his epaulettes. Many were the dangers and difficulties of Mrs. Topham's nether garments to be adjusted. Her train, hastily manufactured by her own liberal taste, fell on one side, and came to a point—she looked as if walking sideways. The bulk which was lavished on her turban would have been well employed on her skirts, which clipped round her, and would not stand out. But these were trifles which she carried off with her usual courage, and, taking Captain Topham's unresisting arm, she led him to the carriage.

The young ladies followed, and Lilia and Honora were left alone.

"Are you sure," said the latter, resuming as she spoke, her usual work, "that you don't feel sorry now, when every one else is going, that you are so determined to remain at home?"

"Quite sure; and could you see the party, dearest Honora, you would be reconciled to my remaining at home."

Honora demanded an explanation, and required a particular description. Lilia, drawing the little supper-table near to her sister, began that task which was never declined—she endeavoured to supply the blind with the privilege of sight. Honora was both incredulous and inquisitive, like all who have one physical infirmity. The details took a long time, and most of the carriages had driven along the road, and were emptied of their contents before Mrs. Topham's spangled shoes had had justice done to them. Then the two sisters drew their chairs nearer to the fire; they recurred to more serious, to dearer themes. They talked of Bernard; Honora could not see the delicate and anxious countenance which was lighted up with transient pleasure when he was the theme; but she felt convinced, from many circumstances, that hope deferred was telling upon Lilia,

The blind sister prized the loveliness which she could never more behold; she prized, she overprized it, as the plain always overvalue beauty. She could remember it in the budding season of earliest youth, before a care had traced a line on that fair, clear brow, or had diminished the freshness of that blooming cheek. She longed to know if expectation was making that change which sorrow sometimes spares, but which uncertainty, conjecture, daily anxieties, and fond remembrances inevitably effect.

A stillness, deeper by contrast, had succeeded the unwonted turmoil of the village. Lilia opened a portion of the shutter to look out upon the night. "It is fine, and clear, and beautifully bright," she said, closing it again, "I know not how it is, but though it is eleven o'clock, I feel little inclination to go to bed; I am as much awake, as if I were at the ball."

"Ah, Lilia!" said Honora, sadly, "I fear all your days are to be passed in a vain dream! I am afraid, if Bernard Elphinstone ever does come to claim your hand, you will be so altered that ——— But what is the sound I hear! The front gate is shut to!"

"Perhaps," said Lilia, "William is come home; he said he should not stay long: or perhaps you were mistaken."

"No," replied Honora, "I was not mistaken; and there are horses' feet. Look out—look out, Lilia, some one is coming—and a stranger!"

Lilia opened the shutter; her hands trembled as she did it. It was so clear a night, that every branch of a large elm-tree which grew upon the lawn had its tinge of light; each blade of grass was discernable, and wanted only colour to have the distinctness of daytime. From beneath the covert of the plantation, which formed a belt to the premises, the dark figure of a horseman was seen advancing.

Lilia had only time to say, "Honora, it is he!" and to hasten to the hall, before the stranger alighted. She opened the door left unbarred for William's return, and stood trembling, her dress fluttering in the wind, before the gaze of the stranger. He threw the reins over his horse's neck, and in an instant more clasped her in his arms. Then there was a silence in the hall to which he bore her, for Lilia had nearly fainted. And Honora, alarmed, her quick ear supplying the place of sight, groped her way to the door.

There she heard those words of endearment and encouragement which told her that all was right, that Bernard had returned unaltered, that Lilia was still beloved, still happy. She withdrew, and perhaps a more desolate feeling than had yet possessed her heart seared it, as she passed noiselessly into an adjacent room, in order that the first fond recognition might be uninterrupted.

And it was—the joy of that meeting was complete! How seldom, in this world of sublunary friendship and flickering attachments, is the heart the same, after an interval of two years' absence! Yet it was so here! In Lilia, the ill-starred loved had deepened in its tone and character; in Bernard, it had not lessened. Her claims on his faith had preserved him from a soldier's temptations. Her image had cheered him in difficulties; it had accompanied him in every scene of his late existence; it had been the subject of secret comparison when, during the Continental contest of the last century, he had sometimes found a resting-place in capital cities, and had entered into the brief and social pleasures which a soldier's ever-changing existence presented. He had compared her with others; but Lilia had had no such opportunities of testing her love, or of weakening it. It might have entered into his mind that others might be as fair or as amiable—nay, perhaps as fond, when courted—but such a notion had never even occurred to hers. They met not, therefore, wholly on equal terms of constancy—men and women never can—but they met with as much of faith, with as little of the leaven of human imperfection clinging to their love, as perhaps all but angelic natures could do.

As Bernard looked on the face of Lilia, he saw that she was changed; her very loveliness was changed in character! but that alteration only endeared her to his generous and fond heart, and confirmed his sometimes doubting surmises that she had pined for him in absence, as man ever wishes, and expects, that women *should* pine. Lilia, too, beheld a change in Bernard. There was not that entire gentleness, made interesting by a certain gravity, even melancholy; there was a decision, and confidence, which well became the soldier, but seemed not to belong to Bernard. His face and figure had partaken of the change, and were developed into maturity and force. There was a loftiness of manner, which appeared as if nature, long repressed by circumstances, had broken out in the avowed descendant of a noble race. There was every thing that could rivet a long indulged passion, but not, perhaps, attract so readily one in its infancy;—there was as much to love as formerly, but there was also more to fear. These observations grew on Lilia gradually, and were not the result of this one brief and rapturous interview.

Bernard ran rapidly over the events of their absence—the hard and actual duty, the opportunity, the promotion. He spoke slightly of *that*, yet his tone showed how much he prized the rank denied him by fate, but forced by merit. He next reverted to his hopes of the future.

"My poor mother! Lady Janet Elphinstone's letters," he said, "to my father are not yet discovered. Could they be, they would afford such strong presumptive evidence of our claims, that the notion of an appeal to the House of Lords might be entertained. It would be a long process. Could my dear Lilia ever trust her happiness to such a contingency?"

"Ah!" replied Lilia, "I feel already as if I had nothing to wish. And your brother—is his fate inseparably linked with yours?"

Bernard's brow was clouded for a moment. "Oh, yes; we shall stand or fall by the same decree. If I am an impostor, Sholto is an impostor!"

He spoke with a bitter emphasis on the word, and his face momentarily became flushed.

Lilia grasped his hand, and said, "I could almost wish you to remain but what you are—for *my* sake."

"Ah! Lilia do not say that. My honour is dearer to me than anything in this world—almost than my love," cried Bernard.

He spoke truly: that high value for reputation, which had received so stern a shock, was now the ruling passion of his heart; his temper had become tenacious, from the secret gnawings of fame unsupported, and estimation vacillating. To this inward feeling were added the scrupulous sentiments of a soldier, whose hope of military distinction was now scarcely secondary to that of redeeming his birthright from opprobrium.

Bernard then related how that, returning on a brief leave of absence, he had flown to Hopewood: he had remained there merely to claim Mr. Hope's hospitality, and to explain to him his present circumstances.

He then briefly recurred to their last meeting: his voice faltered when he spoke of the invalid who had sacrificed her own feelings for his sake.

"You know, I suppose," he said, in a low tone, "that she has been of late, better. She believed, when last I saw her, that she left us happy—that she ensured our future union."

There was a gravity in Bernard's tone that was painfully contrasted with the exhilaration of the previous meeting. "She warned me, dear Lilia, when last I saw her—and I must be candid and tell it to you—against your youth and inexperience especially in regard to——in regard to——but you will think me very foolish?"

"I do not know what you can mean," replied Lilia, colouring slightly.

"I am afraid I am of a jealous turn," said Bernard. "I owned to you I was jealous of that profligate, Aylmer. I have conquered those unworthy suspicions, I assure you; but, promise me you will never see him more, if you can avoid it."

"I promise you, indeed; but how does this relate to Miss Stewart?"

"How she could contrive, immured as she was, to know every thing, and everybody, I know not; but she happened to know Mr. Aylmer by reputation, and she heard something about him that related to you." He paused, for he was struck by the deep flush of Lilia's cheek, by the tremor of the hand which he held.

"That he visited you once, or perhaps oftener, when in those lodgings," resumed Bernard, watching the varying expressions of Lilia's countenance.

"That he undoubtedly did," replied Lilia, with a strong effort; "but I scarcely spoke to him. I received him so coldly, that none but a man lost to honourable shame would ever have attempted another visit."

Bernard was disarmed, as well as touched by the emphasis with which she spoke.

"But tell me," he resumed, playfully and fondly, retaining the hand which a slight movement of indignation impelled Lilia to withdraw from his grasp, "were there not some love passages — some proposals, formerly between you—oh, no; Heaven knows I do not mean that—but from Aylmer to you? I assure you I have suffered very needlessly, but very intensely, from jealousy, if such is not the case."

"Do not mention his name to me," cried Lilia; "I sicken at the hated sound. Do not lessen the happiness of our meeting," she added, imploringly, "by such allusions as these; let me be happy for *once!*"

Alas! how prophetically she spoke! how unconsciously she clung to the *present!* and, timorously, like the wounded bird, sought to rest her fluttered plumes upon the protection of the man she loved.

"When you are here, I feel safe," she resumed, almost shuddering as she spoke, "otherwise——"

"Otherwise, what?" asked Bernard, soothingly.

"Nothing; or, at least, I was only going to say, that Lord Ravenspur and Mr. Aylmer are such desperate men—the fame of their wickedness and recklessness is so constantly reaching our ears, that I never do feel, when they are in the county, that any circumspection can quite guard one; but it may be a fanciful idea of mine."

Bernard pondered over these words: his was not now the confiding heart of innocent youth. He had seen society in all its phases; he had seen women in many characters; he had known the infinite wickedness of the heart of man when surrendered to self-indulgence. He thought of these words over and over again, before he answered them: then it was no longer with the playful gallantry of a lover—rather with the grim gravity of a husband.

"It is not a fanciful idea, if you have ever experienced insult," he resumed, almost solemnly, turning his face suddenly towards her, "or the shadow of insult, from these men. Good God! why cannot I be here to protect you?"

"Bernard, dear Bernard!" cried Lilia, alarmed, "you misunderstand me. What is more," she added, with spirit, "I believe—although my inexperience is such that you may smile at the sentiment—that *any* woman resolved never to encourage presumption, may prevent insult even from the boldest. So far she can protect herself."

"Very true; but I cannot endure that they should ever dare to contemplate any addresses to *you*," answered Bernard. "I feel that I could not control myself—that I *must* have vengeance if they dared, either of them, to think of such a thing," he added, looking sternly at Lilia.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "let us drop this unfortunate subject for ever! Promise me you will never recur to it again. You alarm me; you distress and overpower me!" and she burst into tears as she spoke.

Bernard consoled her as a lover can alone console, and as a delicate, sensitive, and timorous being loves to be consoled and supported; but dark surmises had been originated by this conversation: in these the purity, the sincerity of Lilia were never once questioned; but a strong suspicion that some insult had been offered to her by Lord Ravenspur—for on him his thoughts rested—was generated in the mind of Bernard.

The appearance of Honora closed the conversation, too soon, but not before Bernard began to feel that he ought to tear himself away, and that this intrusion upon two sisters, their brother absent, might not bear the best construction. He, therefore, prepared to ride back to Mr. Hope's: there he was to sleep; and thence, after another day given to love and friendship, to depart for London.

The moon was waning, and the deep blue of the heavens clearly visible, as he mounted his horse, and rode through the grounds of the manor-house into the road.

On the following day Bernard, resolved that concealment

should no longer continue, sought an interview with Mr. Hope. Alice had left the room ; the breakfast was finished, and the window thrown open to admit the soft breeze of a spring morning, passing in that delicious scene over beds of hyacinths, and waving gently the wiry jonquil, catching the perfume as it came "as it listeth."

The gabled summits of Hopewood were in the distance : and its closed windows brought a pensive regret to those who looked on it, the one reflecting that there, perhaps, his happiest days had been passed ; the other, that the doomed proprietor of that goodly estate could never gaze again upon that expanse of park, nor watch the trooping deer in their sport, graceful even in their combats, nor mark the rooks in their aërial circles, nor enjoy any of those rich feasts of taste and intellect which the humblest scene has prepared for the cultured mind, but which the English park, unequalled in its characteristics, has its own peculiar properties : both, therefore, were silent, possessed by thoughts which woman might breathe, but man to man rarely would disclose. Bernard was the first to break the silence.

"I told you," he said, as if resuming a previous conversation, "all my grounds of hope for the future ; but I did not call upon your friendship and sympathy on another subject. I am engaged ; an attachment, which I am proud to call mutual, has long existed between me, and a friend of yours and Miss Hope's. I think, by your countenance, I may conclude that you know to whom I refer."

Mr. Hope was silent for some moments ; then he said, "Yes, I do know." As he turned towards Bernard his pale and thoughtful countenance was flushed for an instant, but so slightly that the young lover, absorbed in his happiness, did not observe it."

"My dear friend," he cried, pressing the hand of the clergyman, "you will give us your blessing ; the dearest hope of my life is, that we may one day return to Hopewood, and live and die there."

"You must be guided in that," replied Mr. Hope, mildly, but coldly, "by your notions of duty, supposing that your hopes of success in your appeal are realised. A landlord who is absent from the bulk of his tenantry fulfils not, in my opinion, the great trust reposed in him when he becomes the owner of a large estate."

"At all events," replied Bernard, rising to prepare for his ride to Haskreton, "I shall never like any place half so well. *There* has been formed the friendship which I most value—yours ; *there* has been first felt the attachment which will cease

only with my existence—the first, the last! You do not give me your congratulations!" He extended his hand to Mr. Hope, who grasped it, and held it long, but spoke not.

Bernard, meantime, rode swiftly to the manor-house. There he was fondly expected, rapturously welcomed; and William was then introduced to one who was now openly considered as his future brother-in-law. Still for Lilia's comfort, and until the sanguine hopes of Bernard in regard to his property were realised, the engagement was confided only to intimate friends.

I pass over the happiness of that day, bright as a meteor and transient in its passage, and preceding, as the superstitious would tell us, meteor-like, a season of gloom and calamity. I pass over the felicity which is too full for utterance, too delicate for description, too ecstatic for mortals. The union of two minds which fully comprehend each other, of hearts which are bound by an inexplicable sympathy, seems one of those foretastes of future bliss which we are just angelic enough to participate for an instant, but too weak to have in perpetuity *here*.

The separation was trying, but it was not afflicting; for hope, like a rainbow, arose over the distance, and perfect trust had succeeded the uncertainties of a long and unexplained absence. Towards evening, just at that time when the ploughboy leads his team into the pool, to refresh their heavy-laden hoofs with the ablution; when the labourer is seen by his fireside in his cottage; when the kine are in the farmyard, and the fanes on the church-tower are gilded with the setting sun, Bernard and Lilia walked forth. He was leading his horse, for this last stroll was a prelude to his departure; but she was leaning on his arm.

As they walked slowly down the road along which the huntsmen described in the first opening of this story had rode, they saw a gentleman approaching on horseback. He rode with a listless air, and looked about him with that distrust which a consciousness of weakness imparts. Lilia quickly perceived that it was Mr. Aylmer. She had, it seemed, a sort of instinctive perception of his presence; whether he intercepted her rambling in the fields, or whether he profaned the church by his presence;—or, wherever he was, she was the first to perceive him, and to turn away scared and distrustful at his approach.

The lovers preserved a silence as they passed him; he, on the other hand, drew up his horse, and looked with a transient glimpse of recognition at Lilia; then, as if perceiving her reluctance to speak to him, he looked straight forward, and dashed desperately on.

This incident, trifling as it seems, had more or less an influence on the destiny of one individual. Nothing, indeed, is more striking in life, nothing more forcibly bespeaks the peculiar Providence which guards and guides us, than the effect apparent accidents have upon the fate of man

The farewell was over, and Lilia dejectedly bent her steps homewards; but, whilst words of fondness and assurances of incessant remembrance were exchanged, Mr. Aylmer rode home to the hall.

The windows were closed, Lord Ravenspur was in earnest conference with his steward and a solicitor from a neighbouring town. Letters sealed with black were lying ready for the post-bag, when Mr. Aylmer entered his cousin's private study.

The kindness of Lord Ravenspur for his relative, to his *victim*, in his present shattered and half imbecile state, formed one of the few redeeming traits of a character almost entirely selfish. He raised his head from the letter he was writing, and looking at Aylmer for an instant, with compassion; "You are in a reverie," he said gently: "you are dreaming, Aylmer."

The unfortunate man started up, and said, as if talking in his sleep, "It is very odd that he is come back: I thought he was abroad, and safe enough. I thought he was——"

"Who?" asked Lord Ravenspur, looking at him steadfastly.

The look seemed to recall Mr. Aylmer to recollection. "Who? did I mention any body? I don't think I did. I am sure I was only thinking of my second cousin, Jack Heneage, if I did."

"Jack, who was at Fontenoy, and is there still, for what any one knows," said Lord Ravenspur, "or for what any one cares."

Mr. Aylmer had walked away before this speech was concluded; but that day he was remarked to be more absent and less intelligent even than heretofore. And yet, as Lady Charlotte Courtenay observed, "How could he be worse than he had been!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE WIDOWER.

All was peaceful for a time. Lady Ravenspur's hatchment was placed over the portico of Haskreton; her remains were, according to her will, deposited in the church beside those of

Isabel; the rich and poor did not, it is true, sleep side by side in the dank family vault; but it is not always the peaceful who there repose in all the honour of seclusion from their humbler fellow-creatures. The contentious wife and husband, the jealous, disappointed relative, the hating and hated sister-in-law, are sometimes each laid close to the foe whose tie of consanguinity only added venom and opportunity to disgust and enmity.

Lord Ravenspur had actually the grace, or the hypocrisy, to follow the corpse in black weepers, his face shrouded by a white handkerchief. He was evidently much out of health; so much so, that upon surveying the yawning vault, as the coffin was let down to it, he suddenly fainted: he was carried into the fresh air, but was unable to rejoin the funeral procession.

Mr. Pratt was among the mourners: and, after the doleful luncheon which followed the duties of the day, he begged leave to speak to his lordship in private. Much conjecture was set afloat as to the nature of this secret communication, but those who could have heard it would not have been very much excited by what transpired. The audience was requested merely to apprise his lordship that Mr. Pratt was going to become a family man, to change his condition; and that he would be, therefore, unable to retain the situation which he had so long had in his lordship's household, as chaplain.

"It has been, I regret to say, and indeed, to my shame be it said, rather a nominal office of late," said Lord Ravenspur; "but I mean that it should be otherwise, I am not a bigot, but I think the Established Religion should be supported. And who is the happy fair one, pray, Mr. Pratt? Perhaps that very well-behaved person who waited upon you was companion to the late Lady Ravenspur? I thought there was something in that, Pratt."

"No, my lord." Mr. Pratt hesitated, and raised his glass eyes one instant from the floor. "Not so. I had unknowingly gained the good opinion of another lady; and—and——"

"Ha! you could not marry two ladies at once—unfortunate!"

"Mrs. Howard has secured the prize of my affections," said the smooth Mr. Pratt, with irresistible innocence. "I really could not help it."

Lord Ravenspur started. "Mrs. Howard!—the mother of—shall you be father-in-law of Miss Lilia Howard? Pratt, your fortune is made!"

"My lord," returned the clergyman, not a shadow of expression disturbing his passionless countenance, "you honour me."

"Pratt, I've the greatest respect for you. Now, there's a living in my gift, which I am told must fall vacant next week.

The incumbent has had two strokes of palsy: he *may* survive, but it is not likely. The man must die soon,"

"Your lordship is very good," said Mr. Pratt.

"Now, Pratt, I must unfold my plans of life to you in confidence. Remember, you see I am now a widower: a melancholy condition, Pratt! And, you see, I have been virtually a widower for years, since Lady Ravenspur chose to give me up, most unreasonably; and, indeed, cruelly."

Mr. Pratt looked down, and said nothing; no, not a word to vindicate the memory of one whom, in life, he had exalted on a pedestal of virtue.

Lord Ravenspur resumed. "Certainly a hard case; and I want to be married again. They say, Pratt, that a man pays a high compliment to the memory of his first wife when he gives her a successor. Now, I wish to pay that compliment as soon as possible. I can't bear the notion of Sir Henry Aylmer's being my heir: that is a laudable sentiment, I am sure, Pratt?'

Mr. Pratt waved his hand. "Very natural; highly commendable, I think it is Samuel Johnson who observes that——"

"All mankind must agree in that sentiment," interposed Lord Ravenspur, "to wish to see an old title descend in the direct line. Do you think your future daughter-in-law, Miss Lilia Howard, has any predilections, or foolish engagements, which would prevent her doing herself and her family justice!"

"My lord," murmured Mr. Pratt, overpowered, and scarcely able to speak, "What does your lordship mean?"

"I mean to offer that young lady my hand, if she will do me the honour to accept it. This is still in confidence, Pratt. Now, I am aware that there have been calumnious reports affecting my character; as if a man of rank and fashion could escape them, Pratt."

"Impossible, my lord! impossible!" said Mr. Pratt, waving his lily-white hand, and stooping lower and lower; physically, and, if one may so speak, mentally.

"You must, therefore, use your influence, Pratt. Allow me to avail myself of every opportunity of winning the young lady's regard."

"There cannot be a doubt of it," cried Mr. Pratt, in virtuous indignation at the supposed rejection.

"Well, I don't know; Miss Howard is very retiring, which is what I admire. I never could endure forwardness in a woman," said Lord Ravenspur. "I should not like her if she were *too* willing."

"Assuredly, my lord, assuredly," said Mr. Pratt.

"But," resumed his lordship, "she is almost the only woman I have ever seen, of course excepting the late Lady Ravenspur,

that I *could* like as a wife. Now, Pratt, you must use your influence. You must contrive that, at any rate, I may *see* the lady; and you may rely on that old man's dying."

"God forbid!" said Mr. Pratt, with a deep humility, "that I should wish such a thing."

"Don't be hypocritical, Pratt. You *do* wish it. How do you think I am looking? A little altered since my poor father's time? Hey?"

Lord Ravenspur turned to a glass as he spoke. That shattered, yet still elegant form, was reflected to his gaze, and he sighed, and said, "Not a very comely presence to win a fair lady. But I must cut out Henry Aylmer; he's such a prig, so disgustingly good and respectable. Besides, what gives a zest to my suit is, that he likes her too! Well, Pratt, pray keep my counsel. Meantime, work like the mole, underground, and marry as soon as possible."

Mr. Pratt bowed, and endeavoured to blush, but that process was rarely visible upon his calm face; he merely turned round, just when he was quitting the room, to say, "Your lordship shall be obeyed to the very letter. What may the tithes be of Roseberrow, my lord?"

"Eight or nine hundred a-year, and a vicarage-house," said Lord Ravenspur, looking at him steadfastly. "Let him be put on his probation," he said to himself, as Mr. Pratt quitted the room; "there will be time to see how he behaves."

He sank back into his chair in a reverie half pleasurable, half painful; of an active mind and habits, Lord Ravenspur wanted excitement and occupation. His domestic quarrels had, of late, supplied these, and he had found himself better for them. What are called the pleasures of society, though, we all know, they are often pleasures grim enough, had long palled upon him. After the effervescence of youth, men of real intellect seldom feel much delight in the every-day recreations of the idle. He now felt a void, and a desire, which he called virtue, to taste, for the first time, the boasted success of domestic felicity; a longing for some one tie to life, something to cling to, and to feel that it was his own, haunted his thoughts. It may be said that the feelings which prompted this wish could not be all evil; yet to those who knew Lord Ravenspur well, they appeared but as one part of the infinite selfishness of his nature, and the means which he afterwards contemplated to compass his point were as unscrupulous as any that had ever been employed in the service of his vices.

Lord Ravenspur gave a month, a long month, to decorum; then he emerged again, and, supported by the high-born

relations who still continued his guests, began to feel his way in society as a widower.

He made a round of formal calls to return the many inquiries poured in upon him, the letters of condolence ; and he was well received, especially by those who had daughters.

To the manor-house one of his first visits was paid. How proudly his four white steeds, their harness all black, black the coach, black the footmen, riding behind, and sombre the sole occupant of the coach, pranced up the avenue !

The sounds of the carriage startled the Miss Tophams from their quilling, and they fled like a covey of partridges to their rooms. Mrs. Topham stood her ground better. "Now for a word about the Horse Guards," she said, "while the girls are away. Lilia, my dear, where are you going ?"

"I do not wish to see Lord Ravenspur."

"Well, and as you are engaged now, I do not see why you should ; but as Sophy and Caroline are not—not that I have the least thoughts on the subject—you may as well send them here."

But Lilia was too late. She encountered his lordship in the hall, and he would not enter the little parlour, and he stood with the door open, until she went in. And Lilia, a little relieved to see that Mr. Aylmer was not with Lord Ravenspur, after some reluctance sat down.

Mrs. Topham took the lead in the conversation.

"May I make bold to allude to your lordship's late domestic calamity ? We were all vastly shocked, I assure you, my lord. The same thing happened to poor Harris of the Fusiliers ; and happening that very night of the ball, too, made it more shocking. I declare Topham and I were quite ill when we came back here. We always bring these sort of things home to ourselves, my lord. Topham's none of the strongest."

"Indeed, I am sorry."

"I thought your lordship would be ; for, you see, my lord, service is no inheritance, and, in case anything happened to Topham, there's very little provision for his family."

"But," said Lord Ravenspur, striking on the right chord, and looking at Lilia's averted face, "can no interest push Captain Topham, such a very meritorious officer as he is, on to a majority ?"

"Ah ! how like your late father that was spoke !" cried Mrs. Topham, rapturously. "Certainly—yes !—and your lordship's name can do anything."

"I doubt that ; but I shall be very happy to try its influence," said Lord Ravenspur, modestly, "if you will give me leave."

"Assuredly, my dear lord; and Topham will be for ever indebted to you. I wish your lordship knew his merits, so sadly overlooked as they have been, poor dear man! And when anybody looks at his wife and his poor daughters ——"

"Ah!" cried Lord Ravenspur, with a slight smile, "it is very affecting. To no one is so much injustice shown as to the defenders of our country?"

"My own sentiments, my noble lord; and Lilia's too, if she would say so," added Mrs. Topham, laying a powerful hand on her niece's shoulder. That niece half turned round, upraised an imploring look towards Mrs. Topham. The appeal was noticed by Lord Ravenspur, but he could not then understand it.

He sat some time, and talked pleasantly enough. His was the art of that small talk, which does not appear small; it was so graceful, so besprinkled with refinement and information. The manner was much; for Lord Ravenspur had had little time to store his mind of late years, and was living upon the hoards of his vigorous, and, as report says, indefatigable youth; but small stores, well made use of, are the staple of polite society; and, in proportion as the memory refuses to yield up its treasures, or is devoid of them, wit and imagination sometimes flourish. That ready skill with which awkwardnesses are averted, that seeming practical good nature, which calls forth the best side of qualities of a companion, were all his;—seemingly, but, alas! the core of that fruit, which was so comely and so fragrant, was all decayed and vile —the principal was bad, although the effects were fair and plausible. The habit of a courtesy which becomes almost involuntary has, unhappily more to do with the good breeding and apparent good feeling of the higher classes than they would themselves be possibly willing to allow.

It was some time before Lilia found out the game which Lord Ravenspur was playing; one day it flashed upon her suddenly; then she perceived the risk she ran, in continuing near that man whose inclinations were his law, who knew no rule but those, and whose name was a proverbial expression for self-indulgence, and the cruelty which is its consequence.

In the midst of these matters, a large box of wedding-cake, favours, white gloves, and a letter announcing the event, proclaimed the marriage of Mr. Pratt and Mrs. Howard, and, at the same time, a more than hint was given that the honeymoon would be spent at the manor-house.

The announcement was, however, read aloud. Mrs. Topham took the hint. "Well, then, we must be off, I suppose. However, I should like to stay one day after the happy pair come, to see my poor brother's widow."

Honora's brow was darkened; I do not understand why Mrs. Howard comes *here*," she said, resentfully; "surely her claim on us is at an end."

"Do not, however," said William, "let us behave disrespectfully to any one. I cannot make up my mind to refuse the rights of hospitality, even when, perhaps, I would rather be excused them; but I see not the least occasion for my aunt Topham to remove."

"No; nor I neither," cried Mrs. Topham. Put us anywhere—I am sure the house *is* large enough; and the more the merrier."

It was, therefore, decided to re-open some rooms, long closed, for the newly-married couple, and not to disturb the captain and his wife and family.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DISCOVERY.

It is sometimes apparent, although not always, that our kind actions, not merely those of bounty, in a pecuniary sense, but our benovelent sympathies, our forbearance, our minute kindnesses, are repaid threefold.

Many years had now elapsed since, beneath the roof of Lady Margaret Dalrymple, Bernard Elphinstone had soothed the fancies of the poor invalid, Miss Stuart; he had not, on the discovery of her indiscreet sentiment for himself, treated her with contumely, or exposed her to ridicule. Vexed, sometimes disgusted, often angry occasionally, he had mastered every emotion but that of generous pity.

How her peculiarities had gradually deepened into the serious form of mental aberration, or rather of indulged hypochondria, has been shown.

The effort which she made for others, however, effected a great change in the unhappy invalid. It closed, at once, a long series of chimeras, and a train of uncertainties; she saw that she had deceived herself, and, after some months had elapsed, she recovered her healthful tone of mind—consequently, that of the body. She began to sleep like a Christian, and to eat like a sensible woman. She found that she had the faculty of walking, like other people, and she removed to a country village to perfect the cure.

It happened that, in this village, there was a bachelor clergyman. Now, I do not mean to say any thing severe—quite the

reverse—when I observe that there is a natural affinity between bachelor clergymen and ladies of a certain age, out of health. Miss Stewart soon found that this reverend gentleman's visits gave great consolation ; at all events, they formed an object to her solitary day. They prevented the desolate sense of isolation ; they replaced in some degree, and in a far more secure manner, the visits of Bernard Elphinstone ; and there was a sedateness, a propriety about the good clergyman, that prevented Miss Stewart from indulging in her exuberant fancies.

The lodgings of the invalid were situated at the extremity of the village, opposite the termination of a long and woody lane, through which the few carriages and many carts of the neighbourhood were obliged to pass on their road to the other extremity of the village. This was favourable, but that which did the invalid the most good, which taught her daily a lesson of content, was the sight, across the way, of the village poorhouse ; yet it had little semblance of its actual purpose.

It happened that, within that poorhouse, an aged gentlewoman, who had travelled from a great distance, long lay ill, and sorrowing. She had journeyed from some northern parts to see a relation, who had been some time dead when she arrived. Worn with care and disappointment she fell ill, and was taken to the poorhouse, and there the clergyman of the parish had visited her. He found her so superior to the generality of those who found an asylum there, that, with a humanity that required no Act of Parliament to enforce it, he removed her to a humble lodging, where she died. During her last illness, she told him that she had passed the last two years of her life in fruitless endeavours to discover two brothers, of whose birthright she held some proofs. "I have spent all I had," she said, in feeble accents, "but I can gain no tidings of them."

On another occasion she placed in the hands of the clergyman a small green box, of which she begged him to take charge, and, if ever he could discover two brothers, bearing the name of Elphinstone, to tell them that it had been found among the papers of Helen Hewitt, by her friend and attendant, Jesse Hepburn.

The clergyman had just received this charge, had just waited to see the dim eyes of Jesse Hepburn closed in death, before he paid his usual visit of consolation and gossip to Miss Stewart. He passed at once to her lodgings, carrying in his hands the mysterious green box. "Surely," he said to himself, "I have heard Miss Stewart speak of the Elphinstone cause ; surely she knows something of those brothers."

The invalid still cherished, indeed, that grateful, enthusiastic remembrance of Bernard Elphinstone, which was the rational part of her sentiment towards him. She had traced, in deep sorrow, his infelicitous destiny; she had written to console him, and she fostered in her own mind that tender curiosity, in all his concerns, which was now divested of any selfish views.

To her, by a singular fate, the clergyman of this remote village imparted the charge given to him: unconscious of all that it imported, Miss Stewart was the first to propose the examination of these papers. She even searched for a pair of scissors, to cut away the paper with which it was sealed up.

It was opened, therefore, in her presence. By a deposition left inside it, it appeared that this box had, all along, been treasured up by Helen Hewit. Shortly before the trial it had disappeared; her memory greatly impaired, could not supply, by any allegations, the testimony it contained; all she knew was, that in moving her lodgings, it was intrusted to a chairman, in Edinburgh, and never returned.

On the very night of her death, it had, it appeared, been brought by one of that class of honest men, in whom the spirit of chivalry seems not quite extinct; it had been only mislaid, and was returned when too late,—she who could verify these testimonials was no more.

Among them were the letters of Sir John Stewart, addressed to his wife while he was in prison, referring often to his children, and furnishing the best presumptive evidence of their being his offspring, from the expressions used in confidence respecting them.

Miss Stewart uttered an exclamation of delight. "I—I," she said, in a transport, "shall save him! Dorothy, send to order a postchaise. Get my shawl, Mr. ——: I do not ask you to give these documents out of your own hands, I merely require that you should accompany me to London."

"What, madam—and without my dinner?" asked the old bachelor.

"And you, ma'am, that hasn't been so far as to the turnpike and back for months!" cried Dorothy.

"And this very unseemly haste—it will be said, madam, that we have eloped together," added the clergyman, archly.

"And let us," cried Miss Stewart, giving him her hand, "for so good and honest a purpose. Dorothy, some warm wine and water for this gentleman, and a sandwich,—that must be his dinner; and for me,——"

"Some salvolatile, or camphor-julep, or may be twenty drops of ether?" asked Dorothy.

"No! my cloak—my best bonnet; I must find out Sholto

in his chamber," said the invalid. "Bernard," her voice was lowered as she spoke, "is, I fear, far, far away."

The post-chaise came round in an hour. "These are the long-lost documents to which his mother's dying words referred," said Miss Stewart, addressing the clergyman, as, seated side by side, they dashed down the lane. "Lady Janet was so jealous of them, so afraid of their being tampered with, or stolen, that she would let no one have them but Mrs. Hewit, who kept them under her bed. Memory deserted her. You see how little we can reckon on *any* one in this life.

"There is such a thing as being *too* careful, nevertheless," said the clergyman. "Should you object to having that glass up? I'm a little subject to quinsy."

"To think of quinsies at such a time!" thought Miss Stewart; but she was quickly absorbed in her own thoughts; the hope of benefiting one still dear to her heart—the excitement of doing good—the uncertainty of discovering, so soon as her wishes required, the brothers.

She did, however, find them. I pass over her interview with Sholto, but I cannot forbear giving that which took place upon Bernard's arrival in London from Haskreton, between the brothers.

Their meeting took place in the dusty chambers of Gray's Inn, and Sholto was buried in the perusal of the papers when a step was heard on his chamber stairs, Sholto arose and opened the door. In an instant, the brothers were folded in each other's arms.

Sholto had the caution not to impart too suddenly the subject of his thoughts, his eyes—even *his* eyes, were moistened with tears as he grasped his brother's hand. They sat down—Bernard was the first to speak.

"It is now my duty, dear Sholto," he said, "to open to you a subject connected with my welfare, essential to my happiness; you know, perhaps, what I mean? I have obtained her consent."

Sholto looked at him with a momentary glance of indignation. An instant before, as he greedily perused the documents of the green box, he had paused, sometimes for a moment, to picture to himself Bernard, the proud owner of a large estate, the blessed husband of some lady of suitable—of equal birth it could not be, to the notions of an Elphinstone. His disgust at the reference to a humble destiny was unspeakable. "She consents to share my poverty," resumed Bernard, his face glowing with happiness, "and whenever I have obtained the promotion promised to me we shall be happy."

Sholto could not respond to the bright glance which was

directed towards him. "If you think you shall be happy in forming so inferior a connection, you are right—if you really are of opinion that that will insure your domestic felicity."

"I am," returned Barnard, sternly, and offended at the presumptuous counsel. "She consents to receive me, poor as I am—misrepresented, not even by law entitled to the name I bear; and she honours *me* in the acceptance."

Sholto gave a short scornful laugh. "Her family are probably very well aware that she runs no great risk in so doing,—that our rights are, some day, tolerably certain to be restored to us."

"Sholto," replied Bernard, "for your own sake I advise you to relinquish these vain dreams,—all is over." He sighed as he spoke; then added, quickly, "But if it were not so, and I had my choice of all that Scotland could boast of rank and beauty, Lilia would ever be dearer to me than any human being."

"Stay, ere you condemn my day-dreams," cried Sholto; "all is not over. He arose, drew from underneath the table the green box of papers, and bringing it to the light, took from it a letter, the paper all yellow with age, the characters, however, of the writing, distinct and peculiar, and, like the handwriting of many ladies of the last century in Scotland, greatly resembling the French.

Sholto held it before his brother. "Do you know that hand?"

"It is my mother's," exclaimed Bernard, in a tone of reverence. "By what mystery came it here?"

"Read it," said Sholto, "and see how she speaks of her eldest son,—see how she loved you, and what she expected from you. Read it, and see how strong is the evidence—the presumptive evidence, preserved to us by chance."

They went rapidly through the contents of each letter,—they were the correspondence of Sir John and Lady Janet, when the former languished in prison. They breathed all the fondness of those who never loved each other more than in adversity; they referred in minute terms to their children, of whom Lady Janet sent a description too particular to be refuted. "They bear," she wrote in one letter, "the Elphinstone air, and have the Elphinstone blood in their veins." "Since you are well, and our children," she wrote in another, "what cause have I to grieve?"

Yet, in an epistle dated soon afterwards, the anxieties of the mother broke forth. Her sons, so many years afterwards, reading those effusions, felt as if they were a voice from the tomb. There were disclosed the secrets of that fond and aching heart. There they read that which was intended for one eye only to see, one heart alone to comprehend. "There is something

like sacrilege,—like breaking a confidence, at any rate," said Bernard to his brother, "in thus tearing open the secrets of the dead."

"Pshaw!" said Sholto, fretfully; "they are evidence: what of that?"

"I grant it," returned Bernard, "and they come from that Providence which has watched over us. It was but a mere transient feeling. It seems to me a peculiar Providence," he added, thoughtfully, "that my mother's devoted affection to my father, her tenderness to us, should have prompted her to leave such witnesses of her love and our identity. I scarcely deserve this blessing for having so long despaired. You, Sholto, merit it better." He looked at his brother with pride and kindness as he spoke, and ended by a hasty request that he would pardon his short-lived petulance: "but," he added "Sholto, you must refer to *that* subject no more. Now, tell me, what is to be done?"

"Appeal, of course," said Sholto, his dark eyes glistening with the enthusiasm of hope. "Appeal to the House of Lords."

"And can we ground so important a step upon this small mass of evidence?" inquired Bernard, doubtingly, holding up the papers.

"No; and yet these afford much. But I have been long, very long occupied in setting aside the base confederacy by which our cause was ruined. I have proofs of the French witnesses being bribed. I have been working secretly, but incessantly, for this end. My days, my nights have been passed in it."

The worn countenance, the brow slightly wrinkled, the incipient baldness of the head, and the bent, spare form, attested the truth of Sholto's words. Premature age had come upon him—age without dignity and mildness; and a feeble, exhausted look, without the interest of ill health.

"I hope, Sholto, should ever this appeal be happily concluded, you will recover your former vigour and elasticity," said Bernard.

"Yes, if—if what we have worked for really ennobles us," replied Sholto; "if no degrading ties keep us still down from our due position; if the brother for whom I have staked my existence," he added, passionately, "does not plant a thorn in my side."

Bernard turned away from him. He allowed this real, or forced, burst of feeling to subside before he inquired how the appeal could be conducted—how the vast expense was to be defrayed. He was assured by Sholto that nothing could be more easy than to borrow a large sum of money upon the

strength of their future expectations. All had been considered and reconsidered by Sholto, and he wanted only his brother's consent to set on foot, immediately, the complex and mighty machinery of the law.

On the following day the brothers visited Miss Stewart ; Bernard to express his thanks, Sholto take down, at her lodgings, the history of the treasure from the lips of the clergyman.

The meeting was brief, but kind ; and it left on the mind of one of the parties that consoling and pleasurable sensation which awkwardness overcome, and differences reconciled impart.

"And now," said Miss Stewart, to the clergyman, "when the brothers had again and again renewed their thanks, and when every investigation had been made, "you and I may return to our obscurity."

She arose, for the chaise which was to convey her away was at the door.

"So soon ?" asked Bernard.

"Yes ; for staying in London is expensive, and my means are not so good as when a certain generous friend was rich, for then——"

"Ah ! Miss Stewart, say nothing about that. I may be rich again, and then you will come and live near me—near *us*. And again——"

"Never !" interrupted Miss Stewart ; "we are better apart. No," she added, in a sad and solemn tone, "the stricken deer never returns to the herd. The mind that was once wounded is best tranquil, and may not dare to encounter other minds, other wills. Farewell !"

She hastened down stairs. Bernard, in silence, placed her in the carriage, for his kind heart was full, and he reserved all that he could utter of gratitude and regard for their next meeting.

But that meeting came not. Dorothy's fears were right. The exertions for so fragile a being, long unaccustomed to any effort of mind or body, was too great. As she lived but for one object, so she died for him, and that journey was her last. In a few weeks it was announced that Miss Stewart had died of a slow fever, brought on by her unpremeditated journey.

For a time after this meeting of the brothers their affairs appeared to stand still. Bernard joined his regiment, Sholto immured himself in his chambers. But that indefatigable and ambitious spirit was not at rest ; already had his precocious and vigorous mind become aged, like his body. He had the craftiness, the experience of forty-five, with the ardour of

twenty-five. Toil dismayed him not, disappointment seemed to make little impression on the heart resolutely bent on one point. He soon mastered every point of that celebrated cause in which his name was concerned. He displayed a degree of sagacity and of knowledge which those who had not watched his solitary days and sleepless nights, could not account for. He spent months in travelling about from place to place in search of witnesses, or to receive depositions: he courted men whom he hated, and succumbed to men whom he despised, for the sake of that hope which had accompanied him, an insignificant stranger into the haunts of his fellow-creatures, raising him in fancy above them, and which had sustained him in the privacy of his chambers, or, to speak graphically, of his den in South-square, Gray's-inn.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

COMMONPLACE EVENTS.

Some months passed away: to all they brought their interest; to some they produced changes which marked them for ever in memory as epochs. First, to the inhabitants of Haskreton, there was the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Pratt.

"I cannot think how they can endure coming to the manor-house!" was Honora's constant exclamation. "How Mrs. Pratt can so insult my poor father's memory."

"You may rely upon it such is not her intention," argued the meek William. "Let us bury our resentments, dear Honora, and receive her as becomes my father's children to do."

His words had their effect; for his indulgence to every foible, as well as to every wish of his sisters, gave his opinion that weight which the gentle qualities ensure in domestic life.

The Captain, poor Captain Topham! born to fetch and to carry, and, from long practice, almost a man-milliner in science, was sent to and fro to the nearest market town, six long miles off, for pennyworths of penny riband, half-yards of threepenny gauze, and on other objectionable embassies, such as matching a dyed silk, or exchanging an unbecoming bonnet, made to order, for several days before the bride and bridegroom came. He was really a domestic saint, a man who would wait by his tall wife's side in a shop for two hours, without even a sigh—would feel as much interest in the quality of table-linen as she could do, and knew the useful sizes of tape. He never

was meant for a hero, and so the Horse Guards seemed to have discovered.

"A bride is a bride," said Mrs. Topham, looking anxiously out of the window on the day appointed for Mr. and Mrs. Pratt to arrive; "and though she is an elderly one, she may bring one some new ideas on caps."

"And how the last new skirts are gored," said Sophy.

All the rest welcomed the notion of the visitors somewhat coldly; and an expression of surprise, not to say of dismay, broke from William when he beheld Miss Hartley seated in the post-chaise between Mr. and Mrs. Pratt; for in those days a *tête-a-tête*, even between man and wife during their wedding-journey, was not thought decorous.

The post-chaise stopped at last; and, immersed in band-boxes, Mr. Pratt was seen extricating himself with difficulty. The same placid, smooth face, the same hypocritical gentleness of voice, characterised him as ever. Miss Hartley, very busy, very vociferous, very anxious about dear Mrs. Pratt, came bustling into the house, hoping the beds were well aired. This lady had transferred her allegiance, as gold sticks and white wands are wont to do, on the death of one sovereign, to another. It was curious to see her acting the same part by Mrs. Pratt as she had done to Lady Ravenspur; yet not curious, if one reflects that a long apprenticeship to *parasiteism* renders it, like any other trade, a habit.

Mrs. Pratt, neat to a nicety, descended, handed in with great respect by Mr. Pratt, to her former house. It was observed what entire homage she paid to her husband, and what formality subsisted between them. Though twice married, Mrs. Pratt still came under the denomination of an old maid married. It was never "My dear," but always "Mr. Pratt,"—"You are very good, Mr. Pratt,"—"You are vastly obliging, Mr. Pratt,"—"Mr. Pratt, will you do me the favour to give me your arm!"

Poor Captain Topham, whose shoes were worn out with his excursions, shook his head, and sighed, and said to himself, "She's a very superior woman, that;" though he was sly enough not to make the observation to Mrs. Topham, who fell upon her sister-in-law, in her absence, with an anger aggravated by the richness of Mrs. Pratt's silks and laces, but merely stood up so far for her as to answer,—

"I don't see much amiss with her, my dear."

It was, indeed, impossible to quarrel with Mrs. Pratt. She kept a hedgerow of politeness around her. She had a set of speeches expressly for awkward occasions, such as, "No one knows,"—"Mr. Pratt will tell us, my dear,"—"People may

be of that opinion,"—"I really hope for the best," and other hackneyed phrases, which are quite as provoking to the ardent as downright insults.

An invitation to dinner from his "lordship," to use Mrs. Topham's incessant phrase, soon gladdened the hearts of the visitors. It included every one in one general card, whilst a very friendly note was sent to William, entreating that he would use his influence with his sisters to induce them to honour him with their company.

Honora was out of the question; but William was so urgent that Lilia should not refuse, that her resolution wavered. He represented to her that Lord Ravenspur had already proved a benefactor to him, in releasing him from heavy burdens which would have pressed upon him through life. He appealed to her affections for *him*, and Lilia placed her hand in his, and promised compliance with his wish. Her consent lay heavy at her heart; but she reflected that now there was one ready to protect her from addresses, or even attentions, that were odious to her, and that thought cheered and supported her under every little difficulty. Once or twice, however, even after William had sent the expected note, her mind misgave her. She sought her brother one morning in his little gun-room, where the patient William sat, settling his accounts.

Lilia stood quietly for one moment, that she might not disturb that process which so few masculine tempers can brook, and which so few feminine heads can compass. Compound addition must have been one of the taxes of Adam's fall, I should imagine. And whilst she stood, Lilia thought she saw a shadow of pain on William's brow. He finished with a sigh —(who ever finishes their accounts with a smile?)—he then looked up, and said,—

"All is going on well; in three years more, owing to the very great liberality of his lordship—who has cancelled all my father's debts to him—I shall be clear; and, in time, who knows but that I may buy back the manor-house again? This I owe to Lord Ravenspur."

Lilia had hardly courage to answer,—

"Yes, certainly; but do you know, dear William, if Mr. Aylmer is at the hall just now? for I cannot go to any place where he is."

William looked at her surprised. "Are you not prejudiced, Lilia?"

"No; I once, my dear brother (I cannot tell you now), had reason to be offended with him—it is over now! Do not ask me—but I cannot meet him!"

"No," answered William, colouring deeply, "not if he has

ever had the impertinence to—to address you ; of course not. I will inquire first, and inform you. With regard to Lord Ravenspur, you are safe from any presumption *there;* he is too much of a gentleman ever to degrade himself, or you, or me, by it."

He spoke with some irritation, and Lilia trembled for the consequences. She implored him to think nothing of what she had said, and not to suppose that she meant to implicate Lord Ravenspur in her censure. She saw that William's fraternal pride, once aroused, was not easily to be quelled, and she began to reproach herself with not having kept to her resolution. Her argument softened her brother—alas ! too soon.

"Then you acquit Lord Ravenspur entirely ?" he asked, his face cooling down to its natural colour.

"I ought to do so—indeed I do !" replied Lilia, after some hesitation.

William was satisfied, and the arrangements for dining at the hall went on as heretofore.

In a few days William ascertained that Mr. Aylmer was absent ; and then Lilia assured him that she would not fail in her engagement. And thus she forfeited that best of securities to woman, her consistency : for no considerations, even of sisterly kindness, should ever have induced her to enter the house of Lord Ravenspur again. Let us not judge her—her punishment exceeded her offence.

A dinner-party is a very commonplace thing between those who suit in condition, in their habits of thinking—who are accustomed to meet each other ; but it is anything but commonplace when, by some convulsion of the spheres, the baser elements are mixed up with the finer, and a result is produced such as no previous calculation could have ascertained.

For who could have predicted that Mrs. Topham's first effort was to draw Lord Ravenspur into a corner, and to rehearse to him all Captain Topham's injuries and misfortunes ?—the words "Horse Guards," sounding mournfully in the ears of those who knew what they implied. And then the polite silence of the well-bred company—that very silence so ominous and so reproving, when Mrs. Topham launched out more generally, and appealed to her meek husband, who stood as far off as he could.

The captain flew at her summons. "After dinner, my dear, after dinner his lordship will be revived ; he looks fatigued now, his lordship does, my dear ! "

"I am perfectly well, I thank you, sir," replied Lord Ravenspur, somewhat loftily, for he was jealous of his reputa-

tion for health, and the decline of which he felt a frequent surmise—he could not bear that others should see.

"Indeed! I should not have supposed your lorship enjoyed good health," said the stupid captain.

"Oh, the best of health!" cried Mrs. Topham. "Have we not played together? and don't I know his lordship's constitution as well as my own, though somewhat my junior?"

"That I should have thought was impossible," said Lord Ravenspur, gallantly.

He led Lady Charlotte Courtenay off as he spoke, and checked, with a gentle gravity, her disposition to make merry at poor Mrs. Topham's expense. Lilia, to her surprise, found herself placed on the other side of his lordship, and remembering the strict etiquette of rank imposed in those days, she slightly apologised, saying, "I think I must have mistaken; I ought not to sit here."

"Indeed, you are quite right," replied Lord Ravenspur, gently detaining her; "you see we are such a family party! we must divide relations. Sir Henry, you will be good enough to take the bottom of the table."

Sir Henry gravely complied, and did his best to answer the truisms of Mrs. Pratt on the one hand, and to ward off the assaults of Mrs. Topham on the other; for, elated with her success in the drawing-room, that persevering lady was asking whether he took much interest in military affairs, whether he knew Captain Burton of the Blues, or Major Antrobus of the Scotch Greys, and if he didn't think that Captain Topham looked like a man that had seen much service?

All this was agony to William, who inwardly reflected that Lord Ravenspur would think he had harboured a family of beggars; his cheeks, his forehead, his very eyes, became red with shame; he tried not to hear his aunt's voice, but it was impossible—the whole army list rang in his ears! She was taking Sir Henry Aylmer by storm!

There was a great seeming courtesy between the high and low—the *élite* and the *non-élite*—but there was no approximation. No! Lady Charlotte Courtenay and her set were tabooed. Miss Wingrove, alone, talked with her usual calm good sense, alike to Spartan and to helot. She did not condescend.

After dinner, healths went round, of course, and an immense ceremony having been gone through, Lord Ravenspur observed, "We must drink to the health of the worthy gentleman who has just said grace, in his new character, the Rector of Roseberrow;—Mr. Pratt's health, if you please."

Mr. Pratt coloured and bowed, and bowed and coloured, as

the toast went round; whilst Lord Ravenspur said to Lilia, "A little surprise to you, I think! The old rector only died yesterday, and I could not do better than prefer one whom my late father was partial to. I congratulate you on having Mrs. Pratt so near to you."

"It must be very agreeable to you," said Miss Wingrove; "besides being a fresh family in a neighbourhood not too thickly peopled with good families."

"I consulted *your* comfort in this arrangement," said Lord Ravenspur, in a low voice, to Lilia: "I hope that I am in the right?"

Lilia was too sincere to answer that, as far as her comfort was concerned, he was right. But she falteringly said, "That her family owed him *much!*"

The observation was uttered with a proud humility, but even that acknowledgment was much to Lord Ravenspur, who, blinded by the habit of conquering, or rather by that vanity which it causes, rose from the table to follow the ladies in high spirits.

That probationary period which intervenes between dinner and tea had passed up stairs, with its usual form and slowness. Lady Charlotte and Miss Wingrove monopolised Lilia, whose elegance and loveliness seemed to plead in counteraction to her condition. Both regarded her with some curiosity: Lady Charlotte, as a beauty in the past tense does a beauty in the present tense; Miss Wingrove, as one in whom her "cousin Brian" felt, what she calmly observed to be no common interest; and the regard with which she spoke of Lord Ravenspur, the lenient, but candid tone in which she referred to his errors, the hopes she seemed to entertain of his future career, mollified all Lilia's suspicions of his lordship, before the gentlemen, with wonderful decorum, came up stairs in a state of perfect reason. For all was now decorum in that house, which every one expected to have been the scene of revelries not to be spoken of. By no look, or hint, could Lilia have traced in the noble host the man whom she had once feared: at times, an instinctive apprehension came over her when a softer tone of compliment, a more delicate attention to her wishes than she had looked for, proclaimed some degree of interest in her; but then, she reflected, "the hour is soon at hand when all will be avowed, and then Bernard will be here."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE APPEAL.

Whilst the neighbourhood of Haskreton were occupied by their local politics, the newspapers were again filled with a subject which had lingered for years—the Elphinstone cause. By a sort of miracle, two young men who had sunk into comparative obscurity were thus brought forward again before an inquisitive public; and records long since forgotten, and circumstances forgotten, were raked up from the abyss of oblivion into the broadest daylight.

But few new proofs, compared with the general mass of evidence, were adduced in favour of the appellants, whose appeal was rather grounded upon the injustice of the former decree than upon fresh evidence; yet none of those documents upon which a strong reaction in their favour was excited, made more impression on the public mind than the correspondence of Lady Janet Elphinstone and her husband. No pretended parent could have breathed forth, it was justly thought, those effusions of anxious tenderness: two persons, conscious of imposture, could never have corresponded with each other in such a manner: the letters were written with the eloquence of feeling, that true love which appeals to every heart.

During the greater part of those proceedings in the House of Lords, in which even foreign courts are said to have taken an interest, the person most deeply interested was in Ireland: but he was sustained by hope, and cheered by the blessings of a requited affection. Deeply was that attachment now engrafted on his generous nature: yet—I fear to write the word—yet the life of a young officer in country-quarters was not such as to inspire the mind with a high respect, or stable confidence in the other sex; and there might be much that he had seen, much that he had heard, that might shake in Bernard Elphinstone that fixed, romantic reverence towards the character of woman with which he had entered life. This slight change, as it might seem, was no good preparation for the state which, of all others, requires the truest confidence, the deepest respect for motives. In the part of a lover and a husband, upon what unequal terms do man and woman meet in the great epoch of their destiny!

Lilia, meantime, bore with equanimity what might appear to some the most trying part of her career: one day, the hopes of the Elphinstones seem to prosper; another, according to the newspapers, they sank almost to annihilation. The wise ones in their generation, with whom it were a sin to be sanguine, or to believe in the brighter parts of man's nature, all gloared upon the Elphinstones and their prospects. Had not the law already decided that point? and did any good ever come of setting the law aside? Lord Ravenspur openly scoffed at their "pretensions." Lilia was calm, silent. It seemed to make so little difference to *her* fond heart whether Bernard were the poor soldier or the rich landholder: for *him* she ardently wished his rights—that they were so, she had never for one instant doubted. *She* had *never* doubted! and for this trust, this respect and love, how was she requited?

Lord Ravenspur mistook her composure, and as he now met Lilia, often without constraint—taking, as he did, every opportunity of throwing himself in her way—a sentiment more approaching to love than any affection that had ever possessed him, began to rivet the chains which expediency had begun.

At Roseberrow they met frequently: not that it was the region of romance best suited to inspirit the languid enthusiasm of a fine gentleman like Lord Ravenspur, but it was convenient as to distance; and there was a pleasant path, free from stiles, running through fair meadows—the field-way home to the manor-house, and on one occasion Lord Ravenspur found the advantage of a walk just large enough for two, and too narrow for three.

Lilia had been paying a visit at the rectory, wherein her mother-in-law and Mr. Pratt were now domesticated for life. She found a great difficulty in persuading any of her family to go. William disliked Mr. Pratt—Honora disliked Mrs. Pratt; Mrs. Topham, who had been caller-in-general for the whole family, had, to the great relief of her relations, been ordered off—or, at least, her husband had—to the North. The long-coveted majority had been obtained, and the Tophams flitted for ever from the hospitable manor-house—for they were the last visitants that that house received.

Some visits are those of kindness—some of necessity—some of policy. Lilia's call on Mrs. Pratt, one fine morning, comprised all three of those considerations. It was concluded, and she had passed the neat little flower-beds encircled with trim box, and had opened the paddock, and had begun to traverse the meadow which led towards home, when she saw Lord Ravenspur approaching. He had evidently been at the manor-house, and had heard whither she was gone, and had

taken the same direction. Lilia's colour rose to her cheeks—she felt disposed to turn back ; but reflecting that that would appear far more encouraging to his lordship than to return home, she continued to cross the meadow.

They met in the middle of that large, calm field, on which the unconscious spring-flowers grew, whilst a cow or two, with a philosophic air, turned round for an instant to look at the rencontre, and then went on eating.

Lord Ravenspur was graver, was even more respectful than usual. He did not stop an instant, but turned round directly, saying, "I wish much for the honour of a few minutes' conversation, if not disagreeable to you."

Lilia's heart throbbed ; but she answered tremulously, "No—of course. Is it about my Aunt Topham that you wished to speak? How can I ever——"

"Do not mention her name!" cried Lord Ravenspur, quickly. "If you knew how *much* pleasure I have in serving any friend of yours, you would indulge me every day with some luxury of that sort. No, my dear Miss Howard, it is on a subject very momentous to me that I presume to trouble you. I have waited—I have only waited till the due period of decorum and respect to the memory of the late Lady Ravenspur had expired—for I trust I shall be pardoned for not even professing a regret for the dissolution of a tie to which I was compelled—to——"

Lilia trembled, and stood suddenly still. At that moment a presentiment, forcible beyond what she had ever experienced, shook her frame. It seemed almost enough for Lord Ravenspur to wish and to prevail ; she felt that she was in his power, and a foreboding of some ill hovering over her produced that indescribable feeling which we call heart-sickness. Statue-like she stood, whilst Lord Ravenspur thus proceeded:—

"I must have ill-expressed my feelings, my dear Miss Howard, if they have been misunderstood by you." After a pause of a few moments he extended his hand. "Will you honour me by accepting of this most unworthy hand? I am a reformed and chastened man," he added, with some emotion, "and it is your doing ; for your sake—for the hope of one day claiming your——" he hesitated how to choose a word—"your regard, as my own proud possession." He spoke these words quickly, and Lilia hastened to reply.

"My lord, I am very sorry—I am wrong to permit you even to speak on this subject to one who, like myself," she falteringly added, "has been long, long engaged."

Lord Ravenspur started as she spoke, and seemed not exactly to hear what she had said. She repeated it in a firmer

tone, and turned her face towards him for an instant as she spoke. Lord Ravenspur was calm; he still walked by her side, and after a few moments of thought asked, with a sigh, "if he might inquire to whom?"

The eyes of Lilia were filled with tears as she uttered with deep blushes—the blush of pride as well as of shame—the name ever at her heart—the name dearest, now, in her prayers—the last remembered ere she slept—the first recurred to on awaking.

The colour mounted into Lord Ravenspur's pallid face, and he threw back his head with an air of disdain, which was checked in a moment. He received the intimation with gentlemanly submission, and avowed, certainly, that it deprived him of every hope. He wished her—the words came with an effort—joy, and trusted she was secure on all needful points, such as character, honour, especially circumstances. It was like a dream, certainly, to hear Lord Ravenspur, in all the pride of restored respectability and reinstated virtue, place such a stress on these points.

"I have never doubted them," was Lilia's firm reply; and the answer went to Lord Ravenspur's heart.

He instantly changed the subject, and, as he still walked by her side, turned the conversation to a far different theme. He spoke of the improvements which her brother had been making in his farm, praised Williams exertions, lauded even his intellect, and augured every happiness from his wise career. One would have thought the grave moralist spoke, and not the wild sensualist; and yet Lord Ravenspur did not overact the part. It was dashed with traits of his own peculiar, careless humour, which enhanced, rather than detracted from, the excellence of the imitation.

Lilia and her noble companion had reached the last field, when, prowling about the premises, and looking somewhat like an auctioneer who is making an estimate of their value, they observed a young man in a close greatcoat and travelling cap, evidently either the preparations for a long journey to come, or the residue of precautions for one just passed. It was his manner of looking about him—that intuitive inquisitiveness which attaches to objects great and small—that caused both Lilia and her companion to regard him, even at this critical and embarrassing moment, with surprise. The stranger turned towards them and stood still, and then Lord Ravenspur, uttering an oath, as if thrown quite off his guard, exclaimed, "It *is* the younger Elphinstone! your——"

"I know him but slightly," said Lilia, quickly: yet her heart yearned towards the ungracious Sholto, for he it really

was who now actually approached them. He did more; he walked forward, passed, but only with a low bow, and walked coolly on in the direction of Roseberrow.

Lord Ravenspur looked stedfastly at Lilia: he marked her vexation at this unaccountable conduct in the brother of the very man to whom she had thus avowed herself to be engaged. He looked back, as if to call to him his dog, which had strayed, and he saw Sholto standing partly behind a tree, looking back also. Lord Ravenspur walked on, and a smile played upon his face. "Something wrong here!" he muttered to himself; but he made no remark, but escorted Lilia deferentially to her own house As they parted he said,—

"I trust that this foolish disclosure on my part will not prejudice me against you as a *friend*, Miss Howard?"

"My lord," replied Lilia, "you may be assured it will be sacred."

"Of that I have not the slightest doubt: it is not on that point that I feel any solicitude. But I hope—may I not reiterate that hope?—that I may still be received here as a friend, although my dearest wishes——" He broke off suddenly, pressed the hand kindly extended to him, and left Lilia touched by his generosity, penitent for her long cherished suspicions, and indignant with Sholto Elphinstone.

Her penitence might have been spared: little did she know the bitterness which was concentrated beneath the seeming pliability of Lord Ravenspur, and but faintly could she comprehend that when selfishness, flushed into action by passion, operated solely upon man's depraved nature (or, indeed, on woman's either), what they call honour may be perverted into any sense convenient for the darling object of the hour.

Lord Ravenspur was forced, several times, to rest as he walked home that day; for he was now very feeble, and the excitement of the recent interview shook his small remnant of strength perceptibly. The nerves were said, by some, to be the seat of his disease—by others, the heart: some laid the blame to the grand offender, that oft-calumniated liver—others, on the brain; and all these contrary opinions meant simply this, that the delicate machinery of that spare and wasting frame was worn out, and no hand, save One, could restore to it that mainspring without which life is truly a burden.

As yet, however, the world was all in all to him, and the decay, mercifully slow, acted not as a warning! No; that brain was busy still in contriving what was thought good to some, woe to others; restless, its powers slumbered not; and in what was called the calm and decent period of his

existence, the bad passions of Lord Ravenspur rose to their climax. They burned within him, like a slumbering, destructive fire.

To do him justice, opportunity lent, at that bitter moment in the crisis of his feelings, its aid : all was *not* premeditated —the woe, the life-long sorrow which he imparted was not all design.

As he crossed the road which led into his own park, he stumbled against Sholto Elphinstone. That youth of ill-conditioned mind had again evidently been watching his progress ; and he now drew up sneakingly by his side, and bowing with a proud humility, if such a term can be understood, hoped he " saw his lordship well !"

" I thank you, sir," replied Lord Ravenspur, scarcely touching his hat, " not very well." He spoke those few words with a desperate emphasis, then checked himself, and said,—" But pray what brings you into this part of the country !"

" Oh," said Sholto, casting about in his mind for an indirect answer, " Business, my lord—business ! "

" Not *love ?*" asked Lord Ravenspur, looking at him slily ; " you leave that to your brother !" He paused for a moment, and then added, in an impulse of uncontrollable passion, " I wish him joy—I wish him joy, indeed—but he should have asked Aylmer some few questions first. Not that I mean to assert that the lady is not a person of the highest honour—character—in short, sir, I wish your brother joy, and yourself a good morning."

Lord Ravenspur walked on with wonderful speed after this outbreak, but Sholto overtook him.

" My lord," he said, in a low and hurried tone, " you must allow me to ask an explanation : this is a very serious—" charge, he was going to say, but he substituted " allusion." " My brother's happiness——"

" Of course cannot be endangered if he knows nothing of it," said Lord Ravenspur. " And probably," he added, with much contempt, " Mr. Elphinstone, who knows the world now so well, may not choose to trouble himself about such trifles as —as a young lady's passing many hours in the house of a single man like Aylmer—or myself, for instance—alone !"

Sholto turned pale : he was shocked ; he was also provoked. Much as he hated his brother's intended marriage, he *was* shocked at what seemed to him a gross calumny upon a young lady of whose innocence he could not, in his inmost heart, doubt. Would that he had for ever retained that generous resentment which then glowed in his seared, though youthful breast.

" My lord," he said, whilst the paleness of his countenance

increased, and even his lips became white with rage, "you must prove this!"

"I know little of it," returned Lord Ravenspur, carelessly; "but Harry Aylmer can tell you more." He hesitated an instant—for a moment his resolution wavered; but hatred of a rival—an object with which in the course of his daring and too successful career with the weak, or rather let us call it the depraved part of the sex—for woman is only inwardly weak when she is inwardly vicious—stimulated a nature not originally so malignant as it was subtle.

"Aylmer," he added, hesitatingly, "is not now in this part of the country."

"Give me his address!" said Sholto, sternly. "My lord, I will search him out of the furthermost corner of the world, before I will allow my brother to taint the honour of our house."

"—Which has been so singularly pre-eminent in its immaculate purity," interrupted Lord Ravenspur, contemptuously.

"Of that, my lord," returned Sholto, with a calmness that became him well, "the country may now judge: our appeal was decided yesterday, and our claims are for ever established."

Lord Ravenspur started, and a bitterer jealousy, a more indefatigable malice, was engendered by this intelligence.

"I must own," resumed Sholto, now advancing far into the park, "that I came here, having, after many weeks of anxiety, a few days of leisure, before my brother can possibly return from Ireland, in consequence of some rumours—some idle gossip, it may be—which I heard incidentally about that lady of whom we last spoke. I am an unprejudiced inquirer—my brother could not be so."

Lord Ravenspur hesitated, but his assertion had been made: whatever might be the result of any future inquiry, could it consist with his *honour* to retract? Besides, who could gainsay that Lilia had not actually been many hours in a lone residence of his own, tenanted only by reckless men like himself? The truth might be afterwards explained; but could he resist the temptation of humbling the proud heart which loved the too-enamoured Lilia?

The Rubicon was passed. "You shall have every satisfaction that Harry Aylmer can give you, sir," he said, as they now reached the steps of the house. "Stay, it will be better to have him back here. Will you do me the favour, sir, to loiter this way into the shrubbery, where we may, perhaps, better arrange these matters?—for walls have ears there in the house?"

As he spoke, he sauntered into the deep woods and glades, the rich turf of which was seldom pressed by his feet; nor

would they have been so now, for their vistas, to his fevered mind, disclosed but one object;—those dells, so verdant, were, to his remembrance, associated with one form, and echoed to one voice only: but now, with a pre-occupied mind, Lord Ravenspur walked passively on and on; resting, sometimes, though his spirits were sustained by the themes of the hour, against a tree, or leaning on one of the many sylvan devices with which the late lord had sought to embellish a scene so exquisitely fair. And thus, almost unconsciously, these two men, lost in their discourse to outward objects, came into a deep, overgrown spot, to which once a pellucid pool gave in the summer time that inexpressible freshness which water, shaded around by the light foliage of our garden-trees, imparts around it. But all was now unseemly: spades and wheel-barrows were on the mossy banks—the process of filling up the pool had been long completed, but they were now laying down turf on that barren and unseemly spot.

Lord Ravenspur stopped suddenly short in the course of a speech dexterously contrived to the undoing of a fair reputation—calculated to heap sorrow and disgrace upon the innocent: something, as he looked upon the half-closed, half-dried-up hollow, struck a pang.

He stood still; and then saying, "I thought this had been finished long ago!" turned precipitately back.

CHAPTER XL.

"'He cometh not,' she said."

The decision of the Elphinstone cause was known two days after it had taken place in most gentlemen's houses in the county of ——. William, who was informed of it before his own newspaper had arrived, brought the intelligence to his sisters. They heard it in silence: Lilia's heart was full. Honora felt for the first time, for a certainty, that the time had now arrived when the delight of her existence—the sister whose infantine beauty had never passed away from her memory, should leave her for another land—another home—another sphere. She mourned for herself; yet her nature was generous—for Lilia she triumphed. She arose, and feeling her way to the chair on which Lilia, her cheeks flushed, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her hands clasped together, sat

mute, she impressed a kiss upon that beautiful yet burning forehead.

"Yet it is strange," observed William, answering as it were this mute congratulation, "that Bernard has not written to tell us himself."

"He could not," said Lilia, drawing from her pocket a letter: "he is in Ireland, and it requires four days for his letter to reach us."

"But he surely would not wait for a letter," argued William; "at least, only to write word that he is coming."

"And of that we shall hear to-night, I am *certain*," said Lilia. She spoke in the full assurance of her own innocent and loving heart. Oh how different is woman to man! She doubted him not.

William arose and walked about; looked at the old-fashioned clock that dully struck three when one wished it to strike four, and whose minutes were, on some eventful days, hours—looked at the weather-glass, in hopes of an unfavourable indication there to excuse his coming depression; but a steady "fair" met his eye; and then he was hastening away (having nothing to do) when he suddenly remembered that he had not wished Lilia joy. He hurried back to her, held her hand fondly in his, and covered it with kisses. "However this may turn out, dearest Lilia, you have my fondest wishes."

Lilia looked up at him with that sweet, encouraging smile which had often soothed poor William in his utmost vexations and difficulties. "However it may turn out, dear William?" she repeated: "it can but turn out, as you call it, one way; that is, if we both live," she added, almost gaily, calculating, as the young and happy do, on the certainty of life.

"Yes, to be sure," rejoined William, turning aside, "life is uncertain, and everything is uncertain."

Lilia watched him as he passed by her and strolled out into the garden. It was now the blessed month of May, when Nature lavishes her beauties on the humblest of her scenes, and the tide of animal enjoyment seems at its height. The sound from the bee-hives came even to the spot where Lilia sat; Honora's bower was in all its pride of clematis entwined with the Austrian rose; the lilacs presented one mass of minute blossoms, which wafted to and fro by the light breeze, filled the air with their perfume. The shadow on the old sun-dial was strongly defined, for above there was a cloudless sky; the fresh-mown turf had that rich and peculiar green rarely seen after the early spring. Yet the scene, thus comely and cheering, had few attributes of picturesque beauty, and few traits of high cultivation; but it is astonishing how mere neat-

ness, a few common flowers, with fine weather, and in the spring, can embellish even a circumscribed, flat spot.

Lilia, after gazing for some time at her brother, sprang out after him. She caught his arm;—"William," she said, solemnly, "you know nothing ill that has befallen Bernard, do you?"

William gently disentangled himself from her grasp. "No—no—Lilia, nothing. Excuse me—that is a foolish question. How should I know anything?"

Discouraging and wondering, Lilia retreated to her seat. She was soon interrupted by visitors. The Smiths, the Pattesons, all the little world of Haskreton, crowded in to hear all about the Elphinstones; for now the engagement between Lilia and Bernard was beginning to be generally known. They even dared to congratulate her on the approaching event, on what had happened, and on what was to come.—Of course, the brothers, whom of late no one could "make out," were praised up to the skies, more especially upon the supposition that the elder one would return to live at Hopewood. For importance in a remote region of the British Isles seemed to the good standard families, whose all of aim and all of reverence was limited to ———shire, like no importance at all; it added no neighbour; it gave no fresh house to dine at; it paid for no hounds; it procured no vote for the next county election. Nor was it only this; the families that have taken deep root in one particular county cannot comprehend that out of their set, their round, people can have any importance in society. They know nothing of them; and their places may be fine, their rent-roll capital, their hounds as complete as other people's hounds, but they know them not.

Hopewood was, however, a link, and Lilia, in the dawn of this her prosperity, acknowleged to herself, that if she cherished a wish consequent upon her union with Bernard—for to be allowed to love him, never to have to leave him were happiness enough,—it was that they should live at Hopewood. There she could have Honora often with her; there she should be scarcely separated from William; there she should be near her dearest, her best friends, Mr. and Miss Hope;—they were, at this time, away from Hopewood, and Lilia deeply lamented it, for her happiness was incomplete without their sympathy.

Fresh relays of visitors succeeded the Smiths and Pattesons; and after these, his face screwed up with a sort of peering, scrutinising pleasure, that seemed to sit awkward upon him, came in Uncle Humphrey. He had been travelling from watering-place to watering-place for the last two years, to the great relief of his friends and relations. On the whole, he had found it cheaper; and it was particularly convenient to him

to get away from Haskreton when the family affairs were at a low ebb. Postage was expensive, and he had never troubled his nieces or nephews with many letters, so that he really came now upon them unawares ;—his arrival being very much of the same kind of event, in point of consolation and cheerfulness, as the appearance of a winding-sheet in the candle, or of a single crow in a field—to the superstitious.

His first words were to Lilia ; "I hear you are going to be married, at last, to young Elphinstone. What a strange affair this is of the appeal! Is it not? It must have cost the estate a world of money, and he'll be obliged, I dare say, to live savingly for some years before he encumbers himself with a wife and family—if he's prudent."

"We shall see," said Honora, impatiently.

"You've not heard from him yet? No—I dare say not ; I thought not—he'll take his time about coming :—but your quite sure, I hope, Lilia, of his intentions—quite sure? No 'whaup in the rape' there? as the Scotch say. Ay, you may well smile, Lilia, for I am quite a Scotchman now! I have been as far as Berwick. By the way, Elphinstone's property lies in the Lowlands, as they call it, though they all look like Highlands, I am told. I hear it is very good land he has got ; fine feeding grass there. I would have gone to see it, but I did not know we were to have been so soon related. Well, when am I to be introduced to him?"

"We will let you know, uncle," said Honora, haughtily ; "it will be as well to say nothing more on the subject, if you please at present."

"So ho! I didn't know there was any impediment, not I. Any hitch in the settlement, Lilia?"

Lilia smiled, and shook her head. A happy mind can put up with many annoyances, and even Uncle Humphrey failed to chase the beautiful smile from her face *then*.

He then gave her a dry, cold sort of congratulation, and said, "I must look about for a present for you—something useful. Now, a tea-caddy, I think, is a useful thing. You'll have jewels enough, and more than enough, I dare say." And then arming himself with his umbrella, he walked towards the door. But it was Uncle Humphrey's destiny never to depart from any house without giving pain ; and so, as the fates willed it, he inflicted his sharpest touch just at the last.

"By-the-by, Lilia, what does that young man—Sholto, I think, they call him—mean by lingering and loitering about the place? He has been to call on you, of course?"

Honora turned eagerly round. "It is very strange, Lilia," she exclaimed, "that he should not have called." Her brow darkened ; and her lip even quivered with anger as she spoke.

"I am sure," replied Lilia, "that he will call, when ——" (a smile, and a blush lighted up her face) "when Bernard comes from Ireland."

Uncle Humphrey looked significant; but Honora saw him not, and Lillia would not see him. She withdrew to her own room, restless, but happy; and expectant, for post-time drew on.

But the post brought no letter. Honora was disappointed; Lilia still was sure that one would arrive the next day. William was unusually grave and yet unusually kind. Oh! how the remembrance of that grave, that almost sad kindness, clung to Lilia's heart ever afterwards.

The next day seemed a week until post time; when,—again no letter from Bernard arrived. "It is so stormy," was the trustful Lilia's argument now. "He cannot have crossed from Ireland."

Honora said, "True." William drew his youngest sister's hand within his. She started from her reverie, to ask him again—and again, the earnest question was reiterated, if he knew any thing about Bernard? He answered readily, "No;" and strove, now, to allay her gathering fears, to soothe, to divert her: he assured her solemnly that he knew nothing whatsoever of Mr. Elphinstone of which she also was not aware. They spoke no more on the subject: and Lilia tried to sing, and to banish, in the sounds of her voice, never more plaintive than that evening, the swell of the wind, which drove round the corners of the manor-house, and whistled in every crevice of the old tenement.

The next day, and the next day, no letter came! and Lilia's spirits, not her faith, gave way. She began to fear the storm. What news from the coast were there? She began to apprehend illness—death—sudden death, perhaps; her emotions could no longer be concealed from her brother and sister, those fond relations, whose whole felicity consisted in seeing her happy. William endeavoured to soothe her; he succeeded; he pointed out to them any probable causes of delay; he even, truthful, as he usually was, invented some, and practised on her willing ignorance. Twice, before the usual time, did he send over for letters to the next post town. He had no hopes of getting any; but the mission occupied poor Lilia. At length, much as he disliked the idea of applying to Mr. Sholto Elphinstone for intelligence, he suggested, and Lilia eagerly assented, to inquire, from that gentleman, if he had heard from his brother. Sholto had been staying some days in the neighbourhood, William said, and he dispatched a servant to ascertain his present address; but the result was, the information that he had left that part of the country for some days on his way to Holyhead, to meet his brother.

There was a relief in knowing this ; and Lilia became calmer Honora, on the other hand, began to be sceptical, and even irritable.

"He might have written, at all events," she murmured. "It is now three days, evidently three, since his brother expected him."

"But the weather has been so tempestuous," said Lilia, fixing her eyes mournfully upon the dark clouds, "that he cannot have crossed the Channel in safety."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE DISCLOSURE.

But Bernard Elphinstone *had* crossed the Channel, and in health in spirits, and safety.

At the very time when Lilia was counting the hours—nay, minutes—when her hopes were continually dashed by disappointment, he was in the principal inn of Holyhead, with Sholto.

But was *that* the happy, the reinstated, the honoured, the wealthy Bernard Elphinstone! That drooping form, bowed down, as it were, to the dust by a sudden calamity, was it his, upon whose singular and fortuitous destiny thousands were, at that moment, commenting with envy and surprise? Could that blanched face, those broken accents, that irresolute, nay, almost sullen manner, be his, whose fate, as far as human decree could determine, was henceforth to be one of prosperity and influence? Alas! it is but one of the many instances in which is shown the insufficiency of any circumstances to ensure one hour's felicity. Man may be propitious, and God may will it not.

Bernard Elphinstone had left his quarters in Ireland as soon as he could possibly obtain leave, and crossed to England. With what emotions had he touched on those shores upon which he trod, no longer as an outcast, as a being regarded with suspicion, at all events with pity, but as the acknowledged heir to estates unjustly withheld, may be imagined. As he landed, the figure of his brother, standing with folded arms, and gazing intently on the boat in which the passengers to Holyhead then landed, had overcome the composure of Bernard. He sprang from the boat, his voice was wholly inarticulate, and the tears

were in his eyes, as he endeavoured to return the welcome which his brother gave him home again.

The night had been given to the interests common to both ; the next was differently employed.

To do Sholto justice, he, at that time, firmly believed in the levity, if not depravity, of the young fair creature from whom he tore every blessing of life—if life, guided and succoured by Providence, can be deprived of every blessing ; he considered her, if not lost to shame, lost to the virtuous and the scrupulous—lost to Bernard, the heir to a noble name, and restored to all the honours of his ancient line.

Whatever might be the result, Sholto acted from conviction. Had he but acted with straightforward integrity, which turns not to the right nor to the left—had he, even when he abandoned the gentleness of the dove, not imitated the wiles of the serpent, there had been hopes for the desolate one, who, at the very hour when her fate was decided, was watching, in speechless uncertainty, for the postman's horn ; whose very existence seemed to hang upon the coming of that human automaton, "the herald," not to her of a "noisy world," but the minister of destiny.

To his brother, Sholto was *true ;* how would falsehood have availed with that noble and determined nature ? He told him, but not too soon—he told him kindly, cautiously—what he called the *truth ;* he besought him, for his sake, to bear up—not to avert his face from the light, which was as clear as day.

I pass over the indignation, the astonishment, the unbelief of him who heard, for the first time, that loveliness was but a snare, that modesty was a veil, a deceit ; and beneath that seeming love, and truth, and innocence, lurked the most debasing passions, or, at the best, the most reprehensible levity. That a consciousness, if not of guilt, at all events of a character stained, and whispered away, prompted that ready acquiescence to his suit which had seemed to his trusting heart to be affection. I pass over the transitions, too painful to be rehearsed,—alas ! in this wicked world, too readily to be conceived. For who has been so happy in life as not to know the pangs which accompany the rude and blasting change from confidence to contempt ? who, that has lived to maturity, has not had to tutor the mind to pity, where it once had honoured —to shun, where once its fondest desires were centred—to forget, if forgetfulness can ever succeed an affection worse than lost, more sad than if buried in the grave ; mingled, henceforth, with that which poisons, yet cannot always annihilate it—shame ?

I must also do Bernard justice ; his conduct, in regard to what followed this interview, may be thought by many to have been weak. I am not of that opinion ; it is not the strongest characters that always act with the greatest discretion where the affections are concerned. The cool have, there, an advantage.

It was long before his mind could be brought to entertain what Sholto termed the fact ; in other words, to believe in the levity and duplicity, attended by a surmise of possible guilt, of Lilia. And, in even admitting that fatal conviction to his mind, there were extenuations. His long absence, his consequent mingling with, perhaps, what was then the most careless, if not the most depraved part of society, that which a military life entails ; his actually imperfect acquaintance with Lilia, might plead for his not decisively rejecting an accusation, such as *she*, little as she knew him, really little as she knew of the world, would have died rather than have credited of him. And then, there were other considerations, which a searching retrospect brought from that tomb in which, when happy, we gladly consign painful recollections. There was the former admiration of Lord Ravenspur, to support the credit of the tale—of the well-known adoration of Mr. Aylmer. There were circumstances, also, connected with Lilia's sojourn with Mrs. Topham that gave probability to Lord Ravenspur's statement, and that statement was given solemnly, unreservedly, upon *honour*.

Bernard, after many alternations, after a powerful struggle, lent, at first, a partial, at last, a total belief in the narrative of Sholto.—Poor Lilia.

"But tell me," he said, after a harrowing conversation of many hours, "tell me, once more, *all ;* let me, ere I for ever give her up, and give up hope and happiness as far as wedded life is concerned, hear it again through. Reserve not one particular, Sholto, as you value your peace here and hereafter."

"Indeed," replied Sholto, calmly, "I have not. Let us go through it then, again, briefly, though I feel hurt, Bernard, deeply hurt," he added,—his pale face flushed as he spoke,—at this unbrotherly distrust."

"Pity me!" said Bernard, laying his hand on his, "pity me, forgive me!"

"I told you, as I tell you now, in the same terms, and, as I should say, were the question put to me before the tribunal of my Maker, what I now repeat. I met Lord Ravenspur and Miss Lilia Howard together ; they parted. Even then, proposals of love, not distinctly refused, suffered, at all events, to merge into the questionable form of friendship, had

passed, on his lordship's part. I do not wish to speak unkindly, Bernard."

"No," replied Bernard, writhing with anguish as he spoke, "possibly not."

"Lord Ravenspur, as I before explained to you, was chagrined, I make no doubt, by Miss Howard's avowal. for she eagerly told him of her engagement to you—of that circumstance. To him, the slight shadow attached to a beautiful young lady's character could not, you may readily suppose, be of much moment ; therefore, I can easily suppose that he would gladly give her his hand."

"Pray go on. Villain! what matter to me his wishes?" interrupted Bernard.

"He then told me," Sholto proceeded to say, "that which I have disclosed to you. Others may put a more lenient construction on the incident than I have done, but——"

"And it was attested by Mr. Aylmer?" asked Bernard, sighing as if his heart would burst. "Let us not linger over the subject, Sholto."

"It was ; he was sent for, and, before God, he swore to me—wishing, nevertheless, as I could see, as much as possible, to screen that lady—he swore to me that he had witnessed the occurrence of which Lord Ravenspur had told me ; nay more. there was another witness, another——"

"Enough!" cried Bernard, "enough, Sholto! leave me now! leave me!" he added, in a tone of such determination that Sholto instantly arose ; "give me time to think, to decide ; to-morrow I will tell you—what."

He spoke the last words feebly, and ere Sholto had closed the door, he sank down in his chair, overcome, almost sobbing ; for not by weak woman only, but the strongest of men, by men, apparently, of the most resolute characters, is the dire influence of that nervous sinking of the frame, which knows no vent but tears, experienced.

In the morning he was calm. No traces of the agonies of the past night, no trace of the struggle and the deep grief, of the love that could not be eradicated, of the hope that would not be suppressed, but lured and lighted the mind only to be replaced by the realities of despair,—no trace of those hours that had been passed in solitude and in moody reverie remained, save one—the countenance that could not lie : the voice was calm, the speech was manly and composed.

It was necessary that the brothers should now determine what course to adopt.

Bernard seemed to his brother to have fully considered this course : in the discussion which followed, the different

character of these two young men, born of the same parents, reared in the same nursery, educated by the same preceptors, might be observed ; and, to those who seek to account for the variations of the human heart, with marvel. The object of the one, his sole solace, as it seemed, was to inflict the blow with as little pain as possible,—to screen from every needless sorrow, from every reproach, the being who had deceived him, —to risk his own fame, yes, his dearly paid fame, for honour, rather than injure her. He sought no justification, he appealed to no umpires ; he was ready to make any sacrifice, even to the greatest—that of good opinion.

The aim of the other was to stand clear in the sight of men ; to prevent all possible misconstruction : especially since observation was, as at this time, directed towards their position ; to *prove* that the grounds of action were just ; to raise the family reputation for a nice sense of honour, rather than to sink it ; and he argued that it might be done with certainty.

" I could bring the accusation home to her, that she dared not impugn our conduct," he said, in a low tone.

Bernard gave him a look—a withering look. " Do it, and we sever for ever, Sholto ! Do it, and no tie of blood shall ever induce me to receive you beneath my roof again ! Insult her at your peril ! God forgive me, if I am unjust ; but I think you wish to persecute this poor lost being, Sholto."

Sholto was silent ; he bit his lip to restrain the bitter reply. " Well, then, what course shall we take ? " he inquired at last.

" Let her think me to blame, inconstant, perfidious—let her think so ; but tell her not so ; tell her no falsehoods, Sholto ; and mark, see her alone ; let no one know what passes between you : " he paused, his voice faltered as he added, give her this letter."

Sholto took it instantly.

" And, now, never more speak to me of this theme. I *will* hear nothing of it. I shall return to Ireland."

" Impossible ! " said Sholto ; " there are important, imperative duties to call you to Scotland."

" True. But when those are performed, I shall never live there—never will. I seek the shadow of a happiness lost to me for ever. When I have once done all that I have to perform, I shall return to the service. I never can, I never will be burdened with an establishment and a home."

He spoke with that bitterness which is the worst part of sorrow, and which seldom accompanies a sorrow manifestly dealt by the hand of God. Alas ! what blind creatures are we ! Are not all sorrows sent to us by that hand ? the

disappointments of the tortured heart, no less than the chastisements of sickness, or the life-long pangs of an eternal separation!

"You will think otherwise," rejoined Sholto, much moved; moved for himself; moved, too, for Bernard. Moved for himself, for his brightest hopes centred in seeing his brother again at the head of that ancient house, of that hereditary tenantry, of all the grandeur and glory accompanying the condition of an opulent landholder; a proud position, it must be acknowledged, and one to which, to the rejected, wandering sons of Lady Janet Elphinstone, had attractions which the undoubted children of well-born fathers could but dimly comprehend.

Bernard made no comment. He extended his hand to his brother, and bade him hasten. "Since it must be done, let it be quickly done," he said, "unless you think that ——"

"I have told you everything," replied Sholto, angrily; "I have not kept back one circumstance from you. Do you doubt my trust?"

"Pardon me," cried Bernard, "I am wrong. Pardon the wretch who clings to hope," he added, bitterly, and turned hastily away.

The brothers parted: Sholto to proceed to Haskreton, Bernard to muse in solitary despair by the seashore, until his arrangements for travelling to Scotland were completed. Perhaps in that long, sad reverie, some calmer thoughts, some more collected, if not wiser conclusions, might modify his sentiments on what had passed. We rarely give to Time full credit for the cures which he may effect, for the influences which he might counteract. On reflection, Lilia's gentle virtues, her invariable delicacy of conduct, her pure and *not* overstrained sentiments, her freedom from a suspicious prudery, her dutiful conduct in all the relations of life, the respect and love which everywhere followed her, might recur to defend, like guardian angels, the fortress of that unsullied reputation which had been so rudely assailed. Perhaps they *did*. But to what avail? The messenger had sped on his way, and fleet were the movements of one who dreaded delay.

Perhaps, too, repentance might ensue that friends had not been consulted, and an opportunity of refuting two men, notorious for their profligacy, given to the innocent. Time would have suggested this: but can the jealous man avail himself of his benignant aid? Jealousy never waits! It is remarkable, that when we contemplate performing a kind action, when we seek to extenuate, or wish wholly to vindicate another, our process is ordinarily slow and careful; raise but

a suspicion, create but an apparent cause for it, and how prompt are sinful human beings to action, even when such rash haste may for ever decide on weal and woe, on honour and dishonour!

Sholto, meantime, hastened to Haskreton. What, again, were his feelings and reflections during that journey? For a time, his heart bled for his brother; he had had no conception of the violent anguish which Bernard had displayed on hearing the facts which he had imparted. *He* had never loved! he had never known those gentle influences which, in their unseen, insidious power, do so refine, so elevate the heart of man! To him women were but as the other relations of society—stepping-stones to opulence, or adjuncts to family connection. Sholto was born with all the worst dispositions of that class of society which combines such extremes of good and evil in its ingredients. *He* had an innate sense of the importance of good alliances; he had those stern, hard views of marriage which convert that holy tie into a bargain. Nature seemed to have endowed him with an intuitive knowledge of rent-rolls in his cradle; and he might be supposed to have learned his alphabet on pedigrees. The selfish, the acquisitive, the sinister part in life was natural to him.

Still he did not condemn the unmitigated sorrow of his brother; he admired the fine-hearted, generous *dupe!* He had enough of his mother in him to comprehend the value of genuine feeling, whilst he crushed it in the bud. I know not that that acknowledgment redeems his character. Insensibility may, perhaps, be better pardoned than that wilful extinction of all soft, and noble impulses, with which we pray not to be afflicted in the petition against hardness of heart. Time and reflection aided Sholto in the work he was about to fulfil. Time rarely does much for the hard-hearted.

—How is it that there are moments when the departed seem dearer to us than ever—when we fondly recall the memory of those whom we have long ceased to mourn—and retrace how roughly time has passed with us since *they* faded from the earth like grass, and are no more seen?

On the day that Sholto reached Haskreton, Lilia had been possessed by a sudden and tender remembrance of her mother, who, dying when she was but a girl, had never been to her the confidant or the guide which that tie supplies to one just entering womanhood. Lilia knew her but as a gentle sufferer; an invalid without caprice or murmur; and remembered her mostly as one who, in a house of anxiety and discord, bore her anxieties in silence, and was at peace with all.

Somehow the example recurred to her; and, by an impulse

which she could not explain, she set off that morning to visit the churchyard in which her mother's remains were buried.

This was at some distance from Haskreton, for Mrs. Howard, agreeably to her request, had been interred in the vault of her own family, her father having been the incumbent of a small living near her married home. The humble vicarage in which she had lived was close to the humble church, one of those low, but antique edifices, which, stable in their insignificance, have stood whilst loftier buildings yielded to the lightning, or perished by decay. Chesterton was too lowly for the thunder-blast, and too humble not to be repaired by a common mason or carpenter; so there it stood, planted on the very summit of a hill, in the centre of fields where rarely foot of any biped save the gosling intruded. Around, banked up from the road—a lane which wound about it—was the sacred inclosure in which the tombs of the forefathers of a little scattered hamlet in the valley below lay mouldering. Here slept Mrs. Howard with her ancestry, clergymen chiefly, of good family, poor, proud, and consumptive. Beyond was a vast expanse of view into a rich country, chiefly of arable land, and therefore presenting, at this season, an aspect of repose. The plough was not seen on the heights, nor the spade in the hollow—all was silence—and the slumbers of the dead appeared never to have been invaded by curious eye, in the deathly stillness of the churchyard!

But Lilia sat down there, and though she wept not, the sighs and sounds of sorrow which she breathed forth over that cold stone, on which her mother's early doom was inscribed, spoke even more eloquently than tears that her mind was prepared—somewhat prepared for the events of that miserable day.

She returned, envying—as she crossed the silent fields, and looked back on the secluded parsonage, the isolated church, the deserted, perhaps forgotten, gravestones—the seeming aspect of entire peace. There had her mother dwelt, until a destiny, which Lilia could not term kind, had removed her to a large and troublous sphere.

A great part of the way home lay along a high road; a gentleman on horseback passed Lilia as she walked; she looked up for a moment, and a glance met hers that covered her face with crimson: for an instant the equestrian slackened his pace, then he rode on with great rapidity, then he turned back again. It was Mr. Aylmer! He passed her again, but still without speaking; but there was something in the expression of his eyes, a timid tenderness, a suppressed wistfulness, that Lilia could never forget.

She reached her home; a gentleman was waiting to see her; he wished to see her alone! "It is Bernard!" she exclaimed, and clasped her hands in a transport of joy. "I knew, I knew he would come!"

She sprang into the parlour where, undisturbed by any of the family, Sholto stood. He turned upon her a grave but courteous look—it seemed to freeze every feeling, every energy: Lilia sank down by him on a chair.

"Bernard is then not here? He is ill, I am sure! I know, I know he is ill! Tell me the worst!"

She looked up in Sholto's face, and even to his impervious view of the truth of that look could not err; and in that agonised glance he read—or might have read—her true affection for his brother. But he checked the dangerous pity by the secret thought, "Of course she would not like to lose her prize."

"My brother," he said, loftily, "is well; you do him much honour! He is quite well, be assured. But since you desire me to tell you the worst——"

Lilia here turned round so quickly—her gaze was so intense—that Sholto again paused. A deep silence followed—it was broken by Lilia.

"I do not know," she said, gasping for breath, "what that worst can be, since he is well; but I think it strange that I have had no letter, no message from him—no recognition of the circumstances in which, Mr. Elphinstone," she added, modestly, but with dignity, "we stand towards each other."

Sholto now found words. "It becomes my painful duty," he said, with a cold decision of manner, "to inform you that my brother relinquishes, though with all due respect, the claim he has had the honour of holding on your affections. I am not at liberty to state his reasons—they are best known to himself; perhaps a letter which I have to deliver to you may express them. Perhaps you will do me the favour to read it," he added, pausing between every sentence, for the mute, calm aspect of her whom he addressed, embarrassed, and almost alarmed him. He did not see her face; but she sat so still, her figure was so erect, so unshaken, that he did not, he could not suppose that the shock had overwhelmed his victim.

In a few moments she said, "Give me the letter;" but still without turning towards Sholto.

He presented it to her; it was but the work of a few *minutes*—a few agitated *moments*, to read it. Then, indeed, the instrument of this harsh and cruel embassy saw Lilia's whole form shake, as a slender tree struck by the axe of the forester; then he saw her bend down lower and lower; her

head fell on the arm of the sofa on which she was sitting, and there it rested, as if Lilia had no power to raise it. Sholto was alarmed. "This is not acting," he said to himself; his colour changed; he arose, and walked a few steps towards her. She started at his approach, and shrank from him with an expression of terror and disgust. As she raised a face so wan and woeful, that even Sholto's crafty and callous heart beat the more quickly as he looked on her, she glanced timidly round.

"I hope my brother, my sister, are not in the room; I hope they know nothing of all this!" she said with an apprehensive look, and the tears started into her eyes. She threw herself on the sofa, and there wept.

Sholto was again subdued. "And yet," he thought, "it is obvious that she wishes for concealment, otherwise would not her brother be the first person whom she would call to her aid?" Weak and wicked Sholto! Weak, though confident in his own superior sagacity, and strong, as he deemed it, in his suspicions.

He stood by, and allowed the passion of grief to have its course; and he could look on, unmoved, whilst that low wail, those bursting sobs, again and again broke the silence of that apartment. He could see unmoved, what, perhaps, afflicts still more the tender heart than the aspect of unmitigated sorrow, the effort to recover from that hysterical paroxysm—he could look on that drooping form which strove to raise itself, and from that face of anguish, from which the tears were often wiped away, as often again and again to be bathed anew in that dew of sorrow.

But at last she spoke. "There is no occasion, sir, that you should remain longer to witness the sorrow you have——" caused, she was about to say; but the word died away unheard. "Some time, I will write to your brother."

"Shall I be the bearer of that despatch?" asked Sholto, in a soothing tone.

"No."

"Or is there any thing that you would wish me to say, or to explain?" asked Sholto, again somewhat touched by the tone of despondency, the air of quiet, but determined suffering which gave to that monosyllable expression.

"No—no—there is nothing to be said, nothing to be explained; your brother's letter explains all. But since he says that he loved me once, I wish to write to him, to——to——"

"Not to reproach him, I hope?" replied Sholto, alarmed at what the result of so dangerous a correspondence might be.

"My brother, madam, is most anxious to behave like a man of honour. He wished me to say, if by any sacrifice he could render your life more happy—your means of living, I would say, more ample, he should be proud to add to them by the surrender of any portion of his income, which—which——" He hesitated, for Lilia arose, and turned round suddenly towards him. He never forgot her air, her look, her voice; he quailed before the dignity of that slight form, and the sounds of that soft and trembling voice, which, as it rebuked and humbled him, still retained its feminine and touching tone.

Her figure seemed expanded, her eyes lighted with a sudden and indescribable light, as she bade him leave her, and insult her no more—as she asked him by what right he entered there, first to blight her days with misery, and then to degrade her by bartering her peace of mind for *money?* Her resentment gave her eloquence, and Sholto, abashed, bowed beneath the passionate address.

He bent low—he bent,—mean and vile—the suspicious one before the object of his suspicion. He was beginning to comprehend that he had gone too far, and was casting in his mind how best to repair that error, when, on looking up, he found himself alone. She was gone!

In the stillness that followed, Sholto had leisure to recover his presence of mind, and to recur to his former convictions, and to brush up anew that habit of distrust which the vehemence of a disappointed woman had impaired. He looked round with a contemptuous satisfaction too, for his heart was little, and was even narrowing and narrowing from the contraction of its own worldliness—upon the humble apartment—on the evidences of poor circumstances, and the absence of all that suitable *style* which should form the halo of any one adopted into the Elphinstone dynasty. His grovelling mind recovered its bitter tone, and he stepped forth into the garden.

"After all, this may be only acting," he was saying to himself, as he passed an open window, through which low and sad voices reached his ears. He looked in: there was Lilia folded in her sisters arms; her head had fallen for support on the shoulder of Honora; the healthful, the beautiful Lilia, clung to the blind, the unbeloved Honora, for solace.

Sholto gazed for a moment at that little scene; this, at all events, was no acting. He felt that he had incurred a risk, and resolved that those who were the original cause of this awkwardness should be responsible for their suggestions. He hastened to find Lord Ravenspur.

CHAPTER XLII.

AWKWARD EXPLANATIONS.

As Sholto entered the Hall, sounds of merriment were contrasted by the wail of poor Lilia's voice, as she hung about the neck of her sister. A large party were just setting out to ride, and his lordship's horses were at the door. Nevertheless, Sholto was instantly admitted into the library, and Lord Ravenspur, equipped for his ride, came hastily in to hold a conference.

It was evident to Sholto that Lord Ravenspur was eager for a result similar to that which he had to relate ; for he said, in a hurried manner,—

"Well ; how have you proceeded ?"

"Oh," replied Sholto, whilst a grim smile passed over his face, "we have come speedily to a conclusion ; everything is broken off, and my brother is free from this odious engagement—quietly, I hope : but if not——"

He looked at Lord Ravenspur expressively, his dark, bright eyes resting upon the countenance which many had attempted to read, but which few *translated* to their satisfaction.

"If anything happen," said the subtle nobleman, "you have Aylmer's information to go back upon. *Aylmer* is your authority."

"Backed by your lordship's testimony ?" rejoined Sholto.

"Yes, of course—oh, yes ; but, you see, Miss Lilia Howard's brother is a tenant of mine ; the family have been long connected, by their dependency, on ours. I do not wish to come forward, if I can help it."

He rang the bell hastily, as if to check remonstrance, and bade the servant find Mr. Aylmer.

In about ten minutes, the face of that unfortunate man was seen in the library. His form was still erect, and well filled out ; a fine colour was, even then, contrasted with the extreme delicacy of his cousin's complexion ; but there was a dreamy, half-stupid expression in his still fine eyes, which conveyed an impression either of the effects of habitual intemperance, or of the slow progress of cerebral disease.

"Aylmer," said Lord Ravenspur to him, speaking slowly, and as if addressing a child,—"Mr. Elphinstone has broken off his marriage with Miss Lilia Howard. You remember

what you stated, in my presence, to Mr. Sholto Elphinstone, and are ready to vouch for it, if occasion should be ?"

Mr. Aylmer looked out of the window, without speaking.

"Harry," said Lord Ravenspur, laying his hand on his shoulder, and looking at him kindly, "do you hear me ?"

The wonted influence was felt, but was not all-powerful.

"I remember what I said," was the reply ; "but I do not want to injure—her."

There was a touch of sadness in the tone of the last words.

"But you do not wish her to marry Mr. Elphinstone, under every circumstance ?"

Mr. Aylmer took a long time to answer that question. "She may do worse," he said, at last, with a deep sigh.

Lord Ravenspur was in despair.

"Very well. I dare say she will not ask your counsel on that matter, nor mine. We shall expect you to stand to your words, Harry."

To the surprise of Sholto, Mr. Aylmer broke out into a fit of passion ; he spoke so rapidly, and there was such incoherence in what he said, that the wily Sholto thought it best to walk away to the window until the storm had subsided. He could make out, however, that reproach was the burden of the theme, and that Lord Ravenspur averted rather than answered the attack.

"For yourself, sir," said the nobleman, after he had succeeded in persuading Mr. Aylmer to leave the room, "I think you had better quit this part of the country as soon as you can. Everything will die away—her family will never bring it forward."

"Never !" repeated Sholto.

"Good morning ;—Lady Charlotte is waiting for me. You are not riding in our direction, are you ? Once more, don't let my name appear ; it would entail a thousand awkwardnesses, as you may conceive."

"Certainly—most undoubtedly—there can be no occasion," replied Sholto, relieved to think that Mr. Aylmer would be *obliged* by his noble cousin to bear the odium of the tale. "And the sooner the thing dies away the better."

"I think so," said Lord Ravenspur, hastening to his steed.

He rode off, and Sholto walked away ; both calm and satisfied, so that *self* suffered not.

As the riding-party went on, it passed by the manor-house, wherein Lilia's throbbing heart strove to bear not to break.

Lord Ravenspur caught a glimpse of the house, by a turn of the road, through the trees. Her window—long since had he learned which it was—was veiled by a curtain drawn, at

this unusual hour, across it ; he speculated on that trifling circumstance for some time.

—Within that chamber, usually so cheerful—for the swallows built beneath the eaves, and the fragrance of the clematis and the woodbine was perceived when it was opened ; and the eye could just catch, through a break in the trees, a peep into the far country—within that chamber Lilia hid herself from those whom she most loved ; there she retreated from the loud indignation of Honora. William was still away from home.

At this moment of anguish, Lilia found how little those who have not loved can console those who *have*. The accustomed assurance, that he who has deceived is unworthy, but adds a sharper pang to the wounded spirit. It is that which makes the heart bleed. Why release it ?

The stimulus of a just and wounded pride may cure a faint affection ; but a deep, long seated attachment is a disease—let us so call it—too much incorporated with ones very being for such a remedy. Lilia fled from her sister—she shrank from the kind, but violent nature, which overpast the bounds of that delicate line which separates the pride from the affections ;—she admitted all, but she recoiled ; and, beseeching Honora to tell William all that should be known, she closed her door, and surrendered herself to a solitude which needed darkness to make it complete.

She had not been there an hour, when the voice of her brother aroused her to a self-control, which for him was but a slight sacrifice to the grateful and affectionate heart of a sister long dependent, yet never knowing dependence ; long cherished, like a blooming yet delicate plant, which a guardian care seeks to shield from every ill.

She arose from the bed on which she had thrown herself, and withdrew the window-curtain ; a glare of light fell on her face, and, heart sick, she shrank back, but soon regaining her self-command, she opened the door.

William was much agitated, not only with grief, but with passion ; but this, with his true consideration, he kept to himself, merely saying gently, " You are unfit, I see, to talk on this matter now,—depend upon it, some misconstruction, some—some——" He could not finish his sentence. He wrung her hand, and turned away.

Oh how Lilia loved him for that concession to her feelings ! oh how she clung to the blessed idea thus suggested ! From her childhood, William had been known to her in that beautiful domestic character, the peace-maker ; his gentle nature had ever impelled him to comfort, not to embitter life's passage.

"I thought so," said poor Lilia: "and here,—here is the letter—will you read it?" She offered it to him as she spoke; but William put it quickly away.

"No," he answered, somewhat hastily; his spirit, high and honourable, though crushed by circumstances was aroused. He would not, however, at that moment permit Lilia to observe it: he hastened from her.

He rushed into the garden; home was now a scene of dread to him,—he could not encounter Honora; he saw her sitting stern, mournful, and sullen, in her accustomed chair, near the fire, and he passed quickly by the parlour window. He could not speak more that night to Lilia, his heart was heavy,—it throbbed not only with sorrow, but with anger and revenge.

He had always doubted Mr. Elphinstone, and the result of his sister's long-tried constancy seemed but a completion to his ancient distrust—a sequel to his long-formed convictions. Still he was surprised, for he granted him honourable, though he believed him to be proud, and cold, and selfish. The fact is, that Lord Ravenspur's opinion operated insensibly on William's mind. From a boy he had looked up to the family at the Hall, and that insensible subservience, so often still to be observed between tenant and landlord, between the small proprietor and the great one—a remnant of feudal reverence—had influenced William much more than he could have conceived. He knew, and yet he was wilfully blind to the gross defects of Lord Ravenspur; but he had long been clear-sighted when he viewed, under a false medium, the character of Bernard Elphinstone.

There are moments when home even becomes hateful to us,—this was one of them to William; he posted along the road, and took the direction to his Uncle Humphrey's house by a sort of habit, rather than with any intention of calling on that venerable Marplot. Indeed, on seeing his uncle coming up the lane, cool as usual, with his little blind terrier at his heels, his drab single-breasted coat, his salmon-coloured waistcoat, and his gaiters unsplashed, and looking more than usually self-sufficient, William had a great inclination to jump over the hedge, and remain on the other side until Mr. Humphrey had passed by.

But his politeness, or perhaps a sort of old-fashioned reverence for uncles, long gone by, prevented him: they met.

Uncle Humphrey seemed to have at that moment, in perfection, his usual talismanic knowledge of all that was passing in the minds of others; he stopped his nephew with the inquiry, "How's Lilia?"

"Not well," was the almost groaning answer.

"Softly here, William," whispered Uncle Humphrey, mysteriously; "Turn this way—no not that—hedges have ears as well as walls; one never knows who may be on the other side of them. Come down across the path—no, not there, either. I saw your farming man in that field, he may think it odd that we are talking together—just step down to my house."

William followed the drab gaiters in melancholy silence, until they and he stopped before a paling, which separated from the roads a garden, combining the *utile* of cabbages and the *dolce* of flowers. The cabbages preponderated; and a vista of potatoes in flower was seen in the distance.

They entered a red brick tenement, through which ran a passage separating the dining-room from the drawing-room, and opening out upon the back garden, wherein the same composite characters of flower-border and carrot-beds, rosery, and parsley-beds, were clearly perceptible.

The drawing-room was only used on Sundays, and the gentlemen turned into the dining-room, and there, beneath prints of Squire Corbet and his hounds, throwing off, in full chase, in at the death, interlaced with various episodes of gentlemen breaking their necks, did Uncle Humphrey make William sit down.

He then, in a whisper, which even his housekeeper, who was an accomplished listener, could not have made out, imparted the gleanings of a week's curiosity, the scourings of the back-stairs of Haskreton, the skimmings of all that high-life-below-stairs in Lord Ravenspur's establishment fed upon intellectually. No one could ever devise how Uncle Humphrey penetrated into every secret, knew every weak point of every family, foretold to an hour when a bank would fail, or when a couple would separate; perhaps that same housekeeper was, however, no mean agent in his voyages of discovery.

Interspersed with many a "Don't name me if you please," and "Be careful how you mention names," was that information given which nearly drove poor William mad. How Uncle Humphrey knew it, no one could ever conjecture; but he had, through some subterranean channel, attained the knowledge that Mr. Aylmer and Lord Ravenspur had conspired, or, in his words, had laid their heads together to calumniate Lilia, and had raked up an incident which had occurred years since, to build upon a fabric of slander. "And this," pursued Uncle Humphrey, with some warmth, "will be the reason if ever Bernard Elphinstone breaks off with your sister."

"He *has* broken off the engagement!" replied William, his face pale with rage.

"God bless my soul! I am heartily sorry for it. I am exceedingly sorry for it. Why I looked for a settlement of, at least, some hundreds annually, and to its making the family! Dear, dear me! And all that fine property of Elphinstone, too! Well of this you may be sure, that 'tis Aylmer's doing: he owned as much," added Uncle Humphrey, in a whisper, "one night to Pratt, when he was tipsy. Pratt could have prevented it, but he is in my lord's interests and *would* not. I can assure you I have had no small difficulty in making this all out, and in putting two and two together: you have reason to thank me."

"I do: good night." William spoke calmly, but there was something in his eye that alarmed his never-to-anxious uncle. He followed him to the gate, and as they stood under an arch made of raspberry branches, and constructed, in a paroxysm of taste, over the wicket, he whispered,—"Will, take no notice of what I said. You'll promise *that*?"

"I cannot promise!" was the reply.

"Then you'll not mention my name?"

"No!" and as he uttered the word, William darted off. He hastened to Mr. Pratt's. He found Mr. Pratt in his garden, and instantly drew him on one side. The cold caution of Uncle Humphrey had been sufficiently revolting; but the plausible selfishness, the assumed amiability, and the actual deception gilded over with a varnish of conscience, a "word of fear" when uttered by some lips—for, from some, it means a plea to do evil—were even more disgusting.

William told him frankly what he had heard; he was obliged to wait for the workings of Mr. Pratt's conscience, before he could elicit a reply.

"Why, you see, Mr. Howard, I do not approve of mischief-makers: I am a man of peace: such is my profession, such is my practice. Indeed, I am truly sorry to hear that Miss Lilia has met with a disappointment. I hope she feels that it is all for the best."

"She does not feel so at all, at present," was the somewhat bitter reply.

"We may depend upon it, every thing is right," rejoined Mr. Pratt, looking serenely around at his newly-painted and well-tiled rectory-house, with its fat appurtenances, its glebe, and its large outhouses filled at that moment with tithes in kind, and glancing down even to his apple-trees and cherries rich in fruit; in addition to which indications of prosperity was another, namely, that Mr. Pratt was growing stout: his purse was heavy and his duties were light, thus reversing the natural order of things in regard to the parochial clergy of this money-loving island.

William inwardly groaned, but recovering his composure, he asked,—"Did Mr. Aylmer ever presume to say anything to you respecting my sister Lilia?"

"Nothing whilst in the full possession of his reason," replied Mr. Pratt, piously shaking his head. "A man in a state of intemperance forfeits the most blessed privileges of our heavenly gifts!"

He cast up those grey eyes: strutting along all the while with his hands in his pockets, for Mr. Pratt was now a man of consequence.

"And what," asked William, "did he say?"

Mr. Pratt waved those same white hands, and with the meekness of a saint replied,—"Far be it from me to repeat what was uttered in a moment of self-oblivion! but I conceived that some lamentable imprudence had been committed by your sister, Miss Lilia. You won't, however, mention my name?"

William turned from him, Mr. Pratt walking after him with greater despatch than became the rector of Roseberrow, and even opening the gate for him. He then repeated in a low tone,—Sir—Mr. William—sir, I have no wish to make ill-will, or encourage evil speaking, against which I published a volume of sermons some years back, with my name to them: but since the burden of this affair might be laid at the wrong door, and my honoured patron, my Lord Ravenspur, have some trouble on that account, I feel it consistent with my conscience to say explicitly—but, of course you won't mention your authority—that Mr. Aylmer has, when his blessed reason no longer guided him, spoken in a very awkward way about Miss Lilia: some story, as far as I remember, about--about a little indiscretion of your sister's. We must be indulgent, sir; forgive and forget."

"Sir," returned William, fiercely, "there is occasion neither for the one nor the other in this case!"

"Very possibly, sir. God forbid I should judge any one," cried Mr. Pratt, a little alarmed at the vehemence of one usually so gentle.

William did not return to his own house for more than an hour. How that interval was passed his sisters were afterwards apprised. He was at home during the greater part of that evening. Unhappily, Lilia did not spend it, as she was wont to do, in his society. Honora, still more unhappily, inflamed by her uncontrolled sorrow, and by her high temper, the burning resentments of a nature usually so placable as her brother's. He spoke, indeed, but little, and repaired to his own study almost immediately after tea; yet he did not retire to his bed-room till midnight. Once again, in the

course of the evening, he left the house, and was absent about an hour; sometime afterwards a letter was brought to him. He was reading it when Honora entered his room to bid him good night.

She could not see—poor, benighted Honora!—his start as she entered, nor the haste with which, forgetting her blindness, he put aside that fatal letter; she saw not his eyes upturned to her as he beheld her coming there without her accustomed guide, Lilia; and a tenderer feeling than usually possessed his mind towards this sister—stern and somewhat repellant as she was—warmed, at that instant, his kind, kind heart, and gave a tremor to his voice.

He answered her "Good night!" as firmly as he could; but, as she turned to leave the room, he rose, and in a manner unusual to him, took her hand in his. He spoke to her at some length: he exhorted her not to be harsh, nor hasty in her judgments of others; he begged of her to keep her mind, if possible, calm; her judgment suspended as to—as to Lilia. His voice trembled, and he added quickly, "Good night!" yet, as Honora prepared to leave the room, he repeated the solemn exhortation to forgive, and to remember the dread account when all would have to be forgiven.

The earnestness of his manner startled Honora. She answered, touchingly, "Yes, it is easy for you and even for Lilia to calm yourselves; you who have eyesight, and can occupy yourselves, and go about; but for me, who sit lonely all the day long, at least when you are both away, and have nothing to do but to prey upon my own thoughts, it is not easy to forget insults and injuries."

William stood for a moment, in thought. Then he said, with utterance almost inarticulate, "Be kind to Lilia."

"Am I ever otherwise?" cried Honora. "Is not her happiness and yours the only thing that I have on this earth to cherish?" She paused, but received no reply.

After waiting some moments, she wended her dark way to the chamber where, not far from Lilia, she usually slept.

William, with a stern effort, revived after her departure. He had much to do; many accounts to settle in this world; and for the rest—for, on the morrow—such had been the work of that evening—he had to meet the calumniator, to avenge the calumniated!

He spent several hours in those minute arrangements which his daily habits of order rendered less complex at this awful moment, when, for himself, all considerations seemed trifling, save one. He placed his will where it could easily be found, and he noted down to a confidential friend some last injunc-

tions concerning his affairs. He then wrote to Lilia: she had ever been his best-beloved sister, and he told her so; he told her, in the simple terms of familiar love, that his sole dread of death was caused by the fear of leaving her unprotected. He begged her to forgive all those little inconsistencies, those trifling irritations of temper, which, in the hourly ordeal of domestic life, might have ever given her pain. He mentioned how he had provided for her comfort, and for that of Honora, and begged of her to be kind to a few old friends who had never loved him the less in his adversity. And thus a spirit as gentle, as pure, as noble, as ever man yielded to his Maker, reconciled itself to the living.

What solemn thoughts, how searching a review of the past, how tremulous a prescience of the future, might possess his mind as he sat, pale, but calm, in the silence of that night, it is not for human penetration to discern. To the duellist is left that which few death-beds can exhibit, the clear intellect, not clouded by long illness, not excited by delirium; the hurry of the thoughts, the feebleness of the shattered understanding, are not the portion of him whose doom comes from the regulated aim at the appointed moment.

The old clock upon the stairs sounded one before William had completed all his arrangements. He then took a last leave, for so he felt it, of the room which he had occupied as master of the house since his father's death. He looked round with a fond gaze at every object pictured in his heart; for he was a creature of habit and order, whose faculties and tastes were all domestic. He patted his dog sleeping on the rug, and, taking with him his hat and a pair of well-tried pistols, he went up stairs.

He purposed to wish Lilia also good night, but he was spared that last trial. She was asleep—not on her bed, for, like all the wretched, she dreaded the deliberate undressing, the surrendering one's self to that pillow to which so many sorrows crowd—on which such bitter tears are shed. She slept in a large easy chair, on which William remembered his mother to have been often reposing in her last illness; and she looked so like the mother whom William more completely and more fondly remembered than any of his family, that the thought occurred to him, "May she not die early, like my mother?" He put down his candle, and bent over her for a moment; at that instant, as he thought of leaving *her* unprotected, his resolution gave way, but it was only for an instant. Honour was strong, and pure, in this impoverished descendant of an ancient race. Honour, which he may have misconceived, mingled not, at that moment, with any trace of rancour, nor

tainted by the baser motives of revenge. It was not to destroy Mr. Aylmer that he went to meet him face to face, but to vindicate his sister.

He retired slowly, furtively; the slumbers of his sister were undisturbed; the hours passed away, sleepless to him; yet he reposed on his bed, anxious to gain such rest as might suffice to keep the nerves calm. The dawn began to glimmer, and William arose softly, changed his dress, made himself point-device for that set occasion; his old precision clung to him to the last. He took some wine and bread before leaving his room, and then stole forth, through a door which he had purposely left unbarred, to the garden.

He passed on rapidly—once only he stopped to look up at the window of the room where Lilia slept; it was open, for the night had been warm, and he could picture to himself her restlessness; how could it nevertheless, compare to his own? He had to cross his stable-yard, and the homely associations of those useful precincts went to his heart. All his accustomed interests were in the farmyard through which he walked, in order to avoid a public part of the road, along which carts, which supplied a neighbouring town, were wont, even at this early hour, to travel. His objects of care, his little domestic inventions, the well-swept premises in which he had taken such a careful pride, were all, at that moment, great and important in his eyes—they had made the theme of his daily existence.

In the road he was joined by a friend, who came there by appointment, and they proceeded to a remote spot.

Nature slept, as it were, still; the grass was swamped in dew; the flowers hung their drowsy, saturated heads; no breeze touched the tops of the forest trees, the birds were silent; even the lark was still mute; the watch dogs, which had barked during the night, gave up their administration in the dawn. There is something, to me, more gloomy in this deep repose, with light, than in the dreariest and murkiest night. The grey hue on all, the mute resignation of all earthly things to the power of rest, the departing stars, the slow and, at first, cold beams of the majestic sun, give to dawn the unspeakable solemnity which we can figure to attend the resurrection of the soul to regions of light.

William and his friend now walked on very quickly; their way led across silent fields to a wild common, in a dell of which two persons were pacing about, awaiting them.

* * * * Half an hour afterwards the silence was broken by two shots, at intervals, and a countryman, going to his daily toil, saw a gentleman lying, as it seemed, insensible on

the common ; another was hanging over him with clasped hands, in an attitude of grief ;—others stood by the wounded man.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE RESULT.

"It is only a slight wound—one of no consequence whatsoever."

Such were the words spoken to Lilia, as she received her brother *home*. He was lifted out of the postchaise in which he had been brought to the manor-house. When placed on the sofa in the drawing-room, he became very faint ; but still the surgeon, who had been summoned by the way, and the friend who had attended him to the fatal meeting, assured Lilia, assured Honora, who hung over him, that there was no danger ; and as William revived, he extended a hand to each of his sisters, and begged them not to be alarmed. "For," he faltered, "all will be right now : he has apologised."

He spoke these words and fainted again.

Confused, overwhelmed, Lilia had knelt by him, and surrendered to those who could comprehend the disaster the direction of its remedies. But when she saw her brother sinking before her she forgot all sorrow, all terror, save for him ; the energies of the *woman* arose, and never did they leave her until the necessity for exertion ceased.

She asked no questions *then* ; she forebore to bring home to her heart the answer which would have dashed her fortitude, and destroyed her efforts. "Am *I* the cause of this ?" It was not so much her reason which forbade her so doing, it was her affection—that affection which saw but the friend, the brother, the only being left for her, to care for, wounded, in danger.

They bore him to bed. The wound, of which the bleeding had been stopped, was dressed. He was calm, grateful, easy. The curtains were closed ; perfect quiet was enjoined, and Lilia was left to watch, in darkness, the patient. He soon sank to rest.

Then, what a moment was that ! She was then alone ! Everything was done ; she had only to watch, to look, as she watched upon the pale face of her brother, already death-like, already reduced, as if by weeks of illness ; or to bathe, from

time to time, the feverish hand with vinegar, or to moisten the parched lips.

Then, whilst not a sound disturbed the slumbers of her brother, whilst not a voice was heard in that house, usually so cheerful, she could comprehend, she could master the thought, that this was for *her;* that her fame had been destroyed, her purity suspected, her hopes blasted; but she suffered not for herself, when she looked at him. She buried her head in her hands, in the vain hopes of controlling the expression of her anguish.

Her brother awoke, and looked at her. "Be comforted, Lilia," he said, instantly understanding her sorrow. He has promised a written, a public apology."

"But you," sobbed Lilia,—"*you?*"

"Never mind, Lilia, a little pain to me. I could willingly have lost my life for you, my gentle, kind sister; but they tell me I am sure to get well: but if not ——" he paused.

"Oh, William! do not speak of such a possibility! I cannot survive you!"

She spoke in the fulness of her heart. How many have done the same! How many have felt that they could not survive one dearer to them than existence! yet they *have* survived for years, and the world has been to them the same world, all but in one sad remembrance.

William tried to reassure her; he tried, but the effort was languid, for a fixed conviction that he had received his death-blow never, *never* quitted him.

He told her, however, in the broken intervals of ease, all that had occurred; how he had traced to Mr. Aylmer the report which had separated her from Bernard Elphinstone; that he had instantly demanded satisfaction; but not until he had received the wound had Mr. Aylmer consented to a recantation of all that he had stated, and given the promise of a gentlemen that he would do Lilia justice,

"My mind is now at peace," added the wounded man. And in peace did he pass that day.

But, towards night, a restless desire to know if Mr. Aylmer had sent what he had promised—a written recantation and apology—came on; the fever rose high; the wound was not dangerous; the ball had passed through; there seemed no cause for that high state of fever, nor for the danger which ensued. The cause, indeed, lay too deep for remedy; it was in the mind. Perhaps, had Mr. Aylmer fulfilled his promise, had he sent the recantation which he promised, the unseen source of those hours of anguish which followed, might have been healed. It might be the bullet's force which produced the

mischief ; but it was the agonies of the spirit which made that aim fatal.

To Lilia was given strength—the strength of hope ; rather let us call it, of ignorance. Yet she looked, as she flitted from her brother's room, to snatch at refreshment, or to seek aid, like one who had ceased to reason, so dire and sudden was the blow ; and to whom it was left only to feel.

The next day, at William's request, the friend who had accompanied him to the fatal encounter was sent to Mr. Aylmer, in order to urge the fulfilment of his promise. But Mr. Aylmer had fled ; he had fled without leaving the ackowledgment which he had solemnly sworn to record. From that instant William declined ; an irritative fever ensued.

I seek not to particularise the anguish of those few days—of that last struggle ; long were they registered in the hearts of those who, however they may deceive the prosperous, are generally true to the unfortunate—the poor. He had *their* prayers : they lingered about his gate ; they watched the medical attendants in and out ; they followed him to his grave !

But a dreary passage was it to that home of rest.

It was not the wound, it was not an inflammatory attack, hurrying the sufferer to an unthought-of grave, and leaving to those who stood by, and looked on, the poor consolation of thinking that agonies such as his were at rest. It was the slow working of expectation deferred, and the wounded honour—wounded for his sister—that bore the sufferer down, and levelled him, in his prime of youth, to his grave. Day after day, the friend who had accompanied him to the field was sent to seek Mr. Aylmer, and receive his declaration ; but he was gone, no one knew where. As long as it was possible, the confirmation of this intelligence was kept from the dying man ; when, at last, he heard it, he turned from the speaker, and uttered no syllable for hours.

Delirium came on—at first so mildly, that it seemed a mere wandering of the senses, and took the form of a conviction that he must rise. He had much to do, much to settle that evening ; and the discourse of those rambling hours was of letters unanswered, unsent : then it reverted to the daily and homlier scenes of life, and subjects familiar to the sisters who stood by came fearfully to the ear, coupled with incoherency.

Later in the evening the delirium took a different turn—violence : with difficulty could he be kept in bed, for he must, he must, he said, see Mr. Aylmer ; he must have his recantation ; no one should hold him back,—no one should keep him there against his will.

This could not last long : the frame became exhausted,

the words were uttered thickly—more rapidly—the violence abated.

"He is better?" asked Lilia.

The medical man was silent.

The question was renewed.

"He is easy," was the ambiguous reply, and the inquiry was repeated no more.

Then the *mind* asserted its supremacy to save, or to destroy, over all those remedies which are powerless when the spirit is broken.

He died:—Lilia was with him, and she could support his head, and bathe his hands, and administer the vain nourishment until the last; and she could see the desolate Honora standing by, unconscious, unprepared, unwilling to accept the truth; and she could hear the last tones of the voice, blessed to her from childhood, muttering gently—almost inaudibly; and she could comprehend that he knew her not; and she could part with him for ever; and she bore it,—till, as the voice became fainter, the speech faltered, the eye-lids heavier, and the playmate of her childhood breathed his last sigh, his head pillowed on her arm;—Then——but why prolong the scene which thousands may picture from sad remembrance?

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SPIRIT'S RETURN.

The party staying at Haskreton Hall went on, meantime, much in the same way as usual. Some were dull, some were happy, some were prone to cabal, others dozed away an existence peculiarly without care, when its wants are satisfied at other people's expense; some flirted, others gamed, many drank hard: but, among these, Lord Ravenspur was now no more to be found.

Nothing could be more hospitable, according to the spirit of the day, than his house; few persons could be more abstemious than its master; and to this, many of his boon companions, who rose up cool and refreshed after their one bottle of wine, attributed his increasing thinness, and a depression which, in spite of forced, and sometimes, though rarely, of natural spirits, became daily more apparent. Gradually the jokes on his anticipated marriage to some fair dame, changed into specula-

tions that the title might become extinct, and all from that idiotic plan of taking only half-a-pint of wine daily.

It was observable, too, that his lordship's spirits were more easily affected now than formerly. On the day of Mr. William Howard's funeral, he was, for instance, restless in the morning, tremulous in the evening. He had offered to attend that ceremonial, and that offer had been refused: he was evidently hurt, "for what had he to do with Mr. Aylmer's quarrels?"

That affair of Mr. Aylmer's had made, it is true, a passing sensation in that house where most things were *not* taken to heart. First there was the inquest upon the body of Mr. Howard; then, the verdict of wilful murder against Henry Aylmer. Then, he had been harboured a day or two in the house, where he had even tried to keep up the game by an effort at good-fellowship; but every one saw that he was bankrupt in wit, as well as in character and fortune; and bankruptcies of that sort only furnished amusement to the polite society at Haskreton. Miss Wingrove alone looked gravely and sorrowfully upon him: then, when the illness of his adversary became dangerous, Mr. Aylmer disappeared, and was seen no more by his kinsfolk; nor was his name ever bruited among them, for he was poor and imbecile—why should it be?—until it appeared, at his death, in the newspapers. Then there were those who could remember the handsome, hopeful Harry Aylmer, in his youth of promise, and who sighed as they remembered that he had had a short career.

Lord Ravenspur, meantime, declined apace. He was now subject to fits of suffocation, which became of late more frequent. One day he was, to use his own phrase, "as well as ever;" another, he could scarcely walk out of his room. There seemed no obvious cause of that decay which appeared to have begun at the core of his constitution, and every symptom looked like the premature failing of old age, at thirty. His intellect was sharp and clear in conversation; and he even recurred to those studies of his youth in which he had improved a vigorous capacity. He refused to see any physician, or to adopt any system, except such as, by his own reading, he struck out in diet, in hours, and exercise. He became an early riser, and now generally made his appearance at the breakfast table. His temper, formerly somewhat quick, appeared to his friends more kind and placable than heretofore; and a gentle pity for one so gifted and one so infirm, possessed the minds of many who had once viewed him with horror. He seemed, however, to have no presentiment of

death, but talked of the future as if it were certainly in store for him.

He was a good deal shaken by William Howard's funeral: that, every one saw. Honora and Lilia had, on that occasion, been the only chief mourners: they had refused all companionship in that office, and had walked, covered in their black hoods, to the churchyard. The rich, therefore, had stood aloof; but the poor crowded around the yawning grave, and gazed upon the sisters.

The poor had loved the departed—and why? He had had little to bestow on them; for, with a scrupulous sense of honour, which formed a part of his very nature, William had deemed it wrong to *give*, while he still *owed:* but he gave them what they love—respect. It is related of a great and good man, that he always treated the poor, even the old women whom he visited as a Christian minister, as politely as if they were ladies. Such, too, was William's weakness, as some may call it; but the poor are grateful for politeness, and perhaps, where unvitiated, are better judges of it than we think.

Impoverished as he was, William had yet found much to do for others, and his bounty was not measured by its value, but by the motives by which it was prompted.

Lord Ravenspur had walked that morning on a terrace which overlooked the road and the churchyard. He had seen, perhaps not without envy, the crowd that followed a poor, an insignificant man, to his home, and which gave an earnest of that popularity which neither his rank, nor his money, could acquire. Then he beheld—with what secret self-reproach may not be known—the sisters standing over the grave: one, the gloomy, tearless Honora—still, at first, as monumental stone—yet even she trembled, and leaned upon her sister, when the coffin was lowered, and the attendants rudely prepared to fill up the grave; yet she could not see the ceremonial, so common, and yet so unspeakably awful and solemn; she could not see the weeping and silent crowd around. She knew, however, that *that* closed *all;* that every office now for Lilia and herself to perform to their lost brother was finished: to God they had resigned him.

Lord Ravenspur saw, whilst the elder sister stood immoveable, bowing her head once only on the shoulder of her sister, to raise it again erect, stern, gloomy as ever, that Lilia, when the last words of the service were uttered, was fain to cast herself into that very grave, in her despair—*despair* it seemed to him. Ah, no! it was *not* despair—the anguish of separation is not despair!

He beheld all this, and walked quickly away; and a tear stood in his eye—a sentiment painfully tender, a sort of love accompanied by remorse, and a deep, intense admiration of the patient and high-minded Lilia, had caused that very unusual sign of sympathy, or rather, had revived the one spark of good which exists in all breasts. That emotion, too, was saddened by a certain conviction that the hapless mourner, notwithstanding the snares he had set, would never smile on *him:* and that if one ungentle sentiment remained after her chastisement, it was felt towards *him.*

He walked quickly from the scene; but it so happened that it was fated that he should not always escape every serious impression, for, when he entered the house, he found that Mr. Hope, who had performed the ceremony, had called to see him.

The expression of sorrow on the face of the clergyman met, for once, a responsive expression in the countenance of the Peer. Mr. Hope had returned in time only to solace, or to attempt to solace, the bereaved sisters in their calamity. He now wished to hear every particular of those events which had brought it to pass, and he put some searching questions to Lord Ravenspur.

These were answered warily; and an earnest appeal to his lordship's justice and honour, and an entreaty, almost a command, that he would search out Mr. Aylmer in his retreat, and oblige him to do justice to Lilia, was the rejoinder. That was then evaded, and they parted angrily, and met no more on this side of the grave.

"Oh, that I had been with them!" was the agonised expression which Mr. Hope uttered as he quitted Lord Ravenspur's presence. A large party were riding in at the park gates, and the dinner half-hour bell was ringing as they approached, and a numerous party were to sit down that day, to whom the village funeral was but as an incident in their morning's ride.

Some called it picturesque, others said it would make a story for a novel. Lady Charlotte Courtenay observed that the young lady ought to marry Bernard Elphinstone after all. Miss Wingrove looked gravely and curious at her cousin Ravenspur, for she alone, of all who sat at that table, knew, or rather suspected, his part in this affair.

Sir Henry Aylmer was more than usually cold to Lord Ravenspur that day; and yet the dinner was pleasant enough, and his lordship was rarely in better spirits; he ate little, he drank nothing, but he seemed disposed to cast aside care and reflection, if he could. Lady Charlotte found him standing,

that evening, looking at a picture in the gallery which had been decreed by the company to resemble Miss Lilia Howard, and she rallied him upon a sentimentality which she could hardly conceive.

The evening passed gaily away, and, at his usual hour, Lord Ravenspur retired to his dressing-room. He generally read some favourite classic before he went to bed, but that night the book was left untouched, for he was much fatigued: he went to rest unpraying, unshriven, unthinking of the world to come, sadly scheming on improbabilities, and subtilely calculating on contrivances to gratify that darling self-will which had cost him honour, reputation, a constitution. Thus he went on until the close.

As Miss Wingrove was preparing to retire to rest, she received, much to her surprise, a message from her cousin, begging her to go to him; Miss Wingrove's demeanour ever showed the distinction between propriety and prudery. Propriety, strong in her innate force, thinketh no evil; Prudery sees a snare in every attention.

Yet even Miss Wingrove considering her cousin's reputation, considering, too, that she was only a few years his senior, remembering that sundry hints had been given of her suitableness to succeed the last Lady Ravenspur, deemed it best to inform her mother that she was bidden to a conference with her cousin, and then, calm but cheerful, she went into the dressing-room.

"Oh, is it you, Esther?" said Lord Ravenspur, languidly. "Do sit down; you are very good to me."

"You are not well to-night?" asked Miss Wingrove, struck by his emaciated appearance, as a delicate hand, and a wrist white as snow, protruded from the sleeve of a green satin dressing-grown.

"Indeed, I am quite well," replied Lord Ravenspur: "I find myself growing stronger every day. I am a little uneasy. You have heard of this foolish business of Harry Aylmer's?"

"Yes; what has become of him?"

Lord Ravenspur waved his hands, and shrugged his shoulders, and then answered, "His friends are taking care of him somewhere, for he has not been himself ever since this sad business. I, indeed, have had some very intemperate letters from him, which I excuse, as I believe him to be insane."

"It is a pity," said Miss Wingrove, "that you did not take that view of the subject before you permitted him to accept a challenge, and to run the risk of so fatal a result."

"*That*," said Lord Ravenspur, "was indispensable to his

honour. He has always been a source of trouble to me, and will be, I suppose, to the last. But that is not what I wish to say—you are a good creature, cousin Esther ; you see I am concerned, as every man of any feeling should be, for these two poor sisters of my former tenant, Mr. Howard. I wish you would call and inquire how they are, to-morrow."

"And make an opening for your future visits ?" thought Miss Wingrove. She said, however, aloud,—"But I scarcely know them; besides, would it not be more suitable for Lady Charlotte ?"

"Oh, no, no ! Lady Charlotte has not your sense, your kindliness of feeling, indeed."

"Yet, to-day, you told her she was an angel," returned Miss Wingrove, smiling.

"My dear Esther," said her cousin, "I never used that word to any one that I care a straw about. Then you *will* go ? It must be on your own account, the first time ; I want you, indirectly, to ascertain their plans. Then, the second time, say, I beg to offer them that house and all that appertains to it, free of any expense. You will manage this for me, I am sure."

"I should not suppose," replied Miss Wingrove, grave and inquisitive, "that so fair an offer would require any management."

"I do not know ; they are strange and—though you'll think it odd—proud people," replied Lord Ravenspur, who, like many of the rest of his class in that day, thought there was nothing people could be proud of except rank and fortune. "It is very unfair," he added, "to make me responsible for Aylmer's follies ; but I have no doubt that I am mixed up in this affair."

"I have no doubt but that you *are*," thought Miss Wingrove ; but she prudently bade her cousin good night, recommending him, if he could not sleep, to a potion of her own compounding.

She left him : the classical reading was resumed for a moment or two, and then laid down again. Being exceedingly weary, Lord Ravenspur soon retired to an adjoining room, where he slept. His apartment was very solitary, and was situated at an extremity of the house, forming one of a suite of rooms, that suite consisting of his own bed-room, a dressing-room, and of a small room in which his valet slept. That man was not, however, that night, owing to some domestic alteration, in this, his usual chamber.

It was moonlight, and the broad light streamed into the bed-chamber of Lord Ravenspur when he entered it. He drew the

blind hastily down, for he was afraid,—and singularly was that fear verified—that he should not sleep: *he never slept again*, unless that repose which we cannot understand be called sleep.

What occurred that night has been attested on oath—it has been proved by an awful result.

Lord Ravenspur laid his watchful head upon that pillow, whereon schemes of wickedness had often been compassed in a mind intended for better things. Weary as he was, his eyes closed not; but he thought not then of futurity; he thought not of *her* whose doom was found in the now closed-up hollow of the pleasure grounds.

As he lay, however, the curtains half opened; noiselessly, a figure passed round the bed; he saw it first at the space between the drapery to the right; then he beheld it standing at the foot of the bed; then, dimly visible at first, but afterwards clear, as if the blessed light of day shone upon that faded and mournful face, he saw *her* whose image had perhaps, never left his heart.

The night-lamp threw a chastened ray on every object; the moonbeam lent its aid; but visible means of light, for which reason could account, were not needed—the figure stood in light. Clear were the features; moveable, and yet fixed in stedfast gaze, were the deep-set eyes; and thus,—her form, even her unchanged face, endowed with an expression of heavenly beauty and intelligence,—stood the lost Isabel.

Lord Ravenspur clenched the bed-clothes; he gasped, and a tremor shook his feeble frame until the curtains trembled with the effects of that transport of fear; an awe still mightier than personal terror stilled his voice, which would have found utterance, and made his grasp on what his clenched hands held, powerless; when mournfully, but with an air of authority, an aspect even of command, that vision of the unhappy Isabel spoke. She bade him, in deep and solemn tones, which yet in their recognised accents recalled the remembrance of Isabel's voice,—*attend!* she warned him to *prepare;* for on a certain night, and at the hour of midnight, he should *die!* Lord Ravenspur was deeply superstitious; but he was not a coward. He aroused himself, and prepared to address the spectre: but his lips were, as it seemed, glued together; his very tongue was paralysed: he could not speak; and whilst the vain effort was made, the figure, which, as some may think, his sad imagination may have conjured up, passed away, walked slowly round the bed: he saw it here, opposite to his very pillow—he saw it *there*—the face so wan—averted from him, as if the errand were accomplished, the mission of judgment fulfilled. Then it faded from his sight.

The perturbations of this able, erudite, unbelieving, yet superstitious man, were extreme; he never professed to deny them; insensibility would have been, at that moment, a mercy: but he retained the clearness of his senses all the night: the consciousness of what had occurred, the remembrance of that fatal prediction, never left him. In the midst of that agony of terror, in that awful certainty of doom from which never more he could escape, the selfishness of his character remained the same. Remorse afterwards did its work upon his spirits, for ever broken; but that night even the image of Isabel did not recall one sorrow for *her;* he thought only of his doom, only of that hour, so distinctly specified, as by a prophecy that could not err.

—His valet found him in the morning still scared, haggard, gasping; or, to use his own expression, "more dead than alive." It was long before the agitated Lord Ravenspur could summon his friends, and make that declaration before them which has been left on record.

Meantime, whilst yet the inmates of the house were in ignorance of the event of that "rough night," Miss Wingrove set off to fulfil her cousin's behest. As she entered the premises of the manor-house, she saw, however, that her task was needless. The sisters were leaving that long-tenanted abode. Honora, calm, sternly still, was already in the carriage which was to convey them away for ever from that scene of sorrow; but Lilia had not taken her place in it. At last she appeared; that fortitude which had done its part so well, whilst exertion could avail, had now wholly left her. She looked up at the house, at every window; she gazed round at every familiar object; and then, bursting into a passion of grief, bowed down with uncontrollable sorrow, remained standing on the step before the house door.

Miss Wingrove slowly approached. A few servants stood near Lilia; a few villagers, divining that "the ladies" would leave early, had gathered on the lawn. Such was the adieu to the forlorn survivors of an ill-fated family.

Miss Wingrove moved on more quickly, and, coming up to Lilia, touched the white hand which was held before her streaming eyes, and said, "I beg your pardon, but why do you leave a place so dear to you? I trust I am in time; I come with a message from my cousin, to beg that you will continue here."

The quick ear of Honora caught these words. She leaned from the carriage window, and said in a loud and solemn voice,—

"Tell my Lord Ravenspur, that if he can restore the dead

to life, the wretched to peace, we will remain. This has been *his* doing—all—all!"

As she heard these words, Lilia looked up at Miss Wingrove. It was *such* a look of misery as she never could forget. Yet there was no bitterness in those sorrowful eyes, no reproach on that altered countenance.

"God alone can judge him," she said, in a low tone, as she placed her hand in that of Miss Wingrove; "and He *will!* But Lord Ravenspur was kind to my dear, dear brother. Tell him that I said this, and that I forgive him."

"You do!" cried Miss Wingrove, much moved, for she loved her unprincipled cousin. "What, even if you believe that he was, in part, the source of all your afflictions?"

She had touched a fresh chord, a jarring chord in that instrument which Cowper has so beautifully described, as "the mind unstrung"—of which God alone could restore the harmony. Lilia, overpowered, and weakened by days and nights of weeping, threw herself in the arms of an old servant, a nurse who had watched her sunny childhood, and had remained to share in her youthful sorrows, and begged her "to take her away."

Half supporting, half lifting her, the woman placed her in the carriage. It drove away; the villagers slowly dispersed, and Miss Wingrove remained standing alone on the steps.

All around was silent; yet in those deserted chambers, in the untrodden lawn, the uncared-for flower-beds, the bower all overgrown, a commentary might have been read on the power of man, selfish man, over the happiness of others. Miss Wingrove tried not to read that painful lesson, but she felt that all was not right. She scarcely loved her cousin the less for his ordinary faults; but here there was devastation and a mystery. Why had the sisters shunned his sympathy? Why bid him "recall the dead to life, restore the wretched to peace?" She pondered on all these things, and walked abstractedly into the empty rooms, never more to be filled with the race which had tenanted it for years. Already the servants left there were beginning to close up, and to bar the windows, only opened for an hour or two that morning, after the removal of the last tenant to his grave. A waggonful of household effects were to be packed up, and the domestics hastened to *that* work. One of them, a trusty, intelligent woman, was interrupted by Miss Wingrove, with the request that she would show her the room wherein poor Mr. Howard had breathed his last; for there is, to those not too deeply and painfully interested, a great pleasure in the details of calamity.

Of course, these were now freely given; and there was

enough to be gleaned in them to show to a well-judging and conscientious woman that some dark motive had been at play. She had suspected that Mr. Aylmer was merely an instrument. She became grave and anxious, and resolved, acknowledging to herself, like a prudent woman as she was, all the while, that it was no business of hers, that she would gain the truth of the affair from Mr. Hope.

She returned to the hall. Sir Henry Aylmer and Lady Charlotte Courtenay were descending the stairs: they had been visiting Lord Ravenspur in his room: they found him singularly shaken and awe-struck; and before them he had made a solemn recital of the events of the preceding evening. One thing he had alone suppressed—the name of Isabel.

Lady Charlotte was a woman of a hard nature. It is difficult to realise that idea in a woman of agreeable manners, and of some personal beauty; but so it was. Though struck at first by the earnestness of Lord Ravenspur's manner, the impression made by his disclosure soon died away. After an effort, she recovered from it, told her cousin that he was nervous, and offered him a bet of some favourite ornament which he had admired when she wore it, that he would be alive that day twelvemonths.

Sir Henry Aylmer was logical and demonstrative; his disposition was kinder and even gentler than that of Lady Charlotte, but he was determinedly matter-of-fact. He was incredulous upon principle; but had he not been so, his imagination could not compass an apparition. He had never seen one; he had never heard good evidence of one; he had disproved, by the power of his own reasoning, hundreds of inventions. He did not even admit a doubt, he did not descend to an explanation, but he discarded the story altogether, believing "that Lord Ravenspur was as likely to live long—if he took care of himself, and drank madeira instead of port—as he was."

They left the wretched and, as they called him, fanciful invalid, and met Miss Wingrove in time to warn her of what she had to expect.

Whilst they were yet speaking, she was summoned to Lord Ravenspur.

The interest of the previous day had wholly gone by; he did not even ask the result of her visit, but, begging her to sit down by him, he said to his cousin, "Esther, have they told you?"

"They have," she replied. "But why dwell upon so visionary a trouble? I am sure there are enough in life."

"True; but could *you* quite dispel from your mind such a dream—such a dream! as Lady Charlotte calls it? Esther, as

I speak the truth, I swear to you that I saw, last night—there is no one in the ante-room?"

"No."

"I saw Isabel Tracey—my cousin—Isabel! *You* did not know her; she was long, very long here," continued Lord Ravenspur, whilst his face, till that moment of an ashy white, was tinged with the hue of shame; "and was, of course," he added, with much emotion, "much interested in us, and in our concerns."

He paused: Miss Wingrove made no comment: he proceeded, "She was a girl of strong will, and of violent—violent passions; and, upon some quarrel between her and the late Lady Ravenspur, she—but perhaps, you know the story?"

"I do," returned Miss Wingrove, anxious to save Lord Ravenspur any further details, for his eyes were wild, and his glance was wandering, and the moisture stood on his pale and wrinkled forehead.

"Well, is it not strange that I should have seen *her* form? You shake your head, you do not believe me?"

"I believe," said Miss Wingrove, composedly, that it is best not to talk of it—forget it, as you would a dream. What you! with your strong intellect, your philosophy, as you call it, to credit a dream? After all, I believe, it might be only my composing draught."

"I did not take it—no," Lord Ravenspur resumed, after a reverie in which he was so abstracted that he did not notice, did not hear, some judicious observations of his cousin's on the power of imagination, "no—I must ever believe that I saw *her;* but as to the prediction," he added, in a calmer tone, "that must be left to time to determine. I have noted it down here—you will smile—but there is the night—the time." He handed to Miss Wingrove a pocket-book.

"I *do* smile—I cannot but smile at the weakness of the strong," said Miss Wingrove; whilst inwardly she added, "the credulity of the sceptic. But again let me recommend you to speak on this subject no more."

"Only to *you*," said Lord Ravenspur; and the proffered confidence was too grateful to a woman, *not* in love and yet loving, for Miss Wingrove wholly to discountenance it.

She thought to divert him by telling of her visit to the manor. She painted the sorrows of the sisters; but still, his arms folded behind his head, his eyes fixed on vacancy, he heard her not. She stopped short; then, as if awakened by the cessation of some monotonous sound, he asked, abruptly, "Where are they gone?"

"I did not inquire," replied Miss Wingrove.

Lord Ravenspur closed his eyes, as if to sleep; his cousin, after watching him for a few moments, withdrew. She adjourned to a consultation with Sir Henry Aylmer and Lady Charlotte; and they agreed that since Lord Ravenspur's constitution was evidently much shattered, and as he was become nervous, the only way was to distract his attention from the prediction of his imaginary visitant. To fill the house with company; never to refer to his dream, as they styled it; and, in short, to smother by ceaseless gaiety—a remedy which Lady Charlotte liked better than did Miss Wingrove—the doleful remembrance of the past night.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE NEW HOME.

Whilst these events were pending, Mr. Elphinstone had taken possession of his estates in the north. He gained golden opinions, as the saying is, very shortly; for his notions were liberal, and his manners courteous: yet he seemed to permit, rather than to order, the festivities which celebrated his return to the home of his ancestors, and shared in them with a grave decorum. Whether it was the cessation of his usual exertions as an officer, or whether the northern clime did not suit him, or whether some secret uneasiness, not to be dispelled by prosperity, had injured his constitution, his rejoicing friends, and numerous newly-found relations, knew not; but he looked neither well nor happy. His pleasures, as they were termed appeared joyless—his occupations, devoid of the zest which necessity brings, were carried on with a langour for which none but one could account.

Sholto read his heart, and it became his plan to keep from him tidings that could sadden or soften it still more. He continued to withhold from his brother the knowledge of William's fate, and the removal of the sisters: he hoped that time, and perhaps a new interest, might dispel those regrets, which he considered as weak, but could not forbear to pity.

But there was one who was resolved to defeat every stratagem, and to prevent the truth from being known, and innocence from being vindicated—this was Mr. Hope! When Lilia, in the agony of her distress, had clung to him as to her sole friend, her solace, he had vowed to himself never to remit his

exertions until he had restored her to her former estimation in society, and, if possible, to peace of mind.

Yet, in that touching dependence on him—in the tender intimacy which ensured it, when he dared to look into his own heart, what did he find? Was his interest in Lilia solely that of brotherly regard, or had it long—*long* had the absorbing character of a fonder affection?

He shrank not from the self-examination—he was mortal, and he did not deem the weakness criminal: he regarded it rather as the inevitable result of circumstances. Precluded from hope, debarred from those gentle affections which one upon whom Fate had not set her mark might hope to share, Mr. Hope found—the discovery was not new—that the good are even more accessible to deep interests than the bad. His was no selfish nor exacting sentiment: he and Lord Ravenspur had shared the same fate. How differently did they act! The one consulted only his own gratification, and sought to obtain what he coveted; the other considered alone *her* happiness.

And Lilia never knew, never suspected, that in all that followed her misfortunes, in all that was done for her peace of mind, there was a struggle, and perhaps we are wrong thus to term it; for that which is a struggle to the selfish, is but a victory to the benevolent.

Her friends had arranged every thing for her: they prepared for her and for Honora a cottage near their own home: they fulfilled, to the extent, that commandment of love, which says, "Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of these little ones, ye do it unto me."

The nobleness of their hearts was shown in all: the delicacy of taste made those obligations a source, not of humble gratitude, but of grateful affection. But a difference of character might even here be seen between Mr. Hope and his sister. His efforts all tended to restore intrinsic peace of mind. His sister thought most of the opinion of the world; hers, therefore, were directed to a re-establishment in the world's opinion.

The means which the brother and sister took to accomplish their wishes differed. They both resented the behaviour of Bernard Elphinstone. They both viewed his conduct as that of a worldly, and heartless man: but Mr. Hope trusted, by a silence respecting him, and by time and reasoning, to soothe angry feelings, and to ally the bitterness of mortified affection. Alice, on the other hand, tried to cure that festering wound which eats into the very heart's core,—the work of unkindness and treachery,—by loud invectives, in which she was readily joined by Honora.

One day Lilia released herself from their united efforts to stimulate what her sister and Miss Hope vainly thought was the best cure for unrequited love. Pride may, perhaps, be one remedy; but it is a remedy which engenders maladies worse than the disease; and, at all events, the gentle dignity of Lilia's character was not susceptible of that pungent and violent medicine.

She stole, therefore, down a path away from that which Miss Hope had taken on her way home, and as she turned into a secluded lane, beautifully garnished with all the adornments of summer, she gave way, unseen, to that mingled despondency and vexation, that lingering affection struggling with condemnation, which ever assailed her, unresisted only when she was alone. For, in Honora's presence, she repressed the tear, she smothered the sigh, and that unfortunate sister could not read the countenance which spoke of so much misery, and which disclosed the emotions of a heart, whatever the judgment might be, unconvinced.

For, since Lilia had learned upon what grounds Bernard had broken off his engagement, she had acquitted him of treachery. She knew how greatly appearances were against her; and *she* could comprehend Lord Ravenspur's motives for traducing her, and for a bold attempt to mar any hopes of her marriage with another.

But Honora could not understand this, and Miss Hope saw, in his withdrawal, merely a plea for extricating an opulent young man from an early and imprudent engagement.

"Had you been of high rank," said Honora, "certain reports would not have affected Mr. Elphinstone so greatly."

"We shall probably hear, sometime or other, the conclusion of the story," observed Miss Hope, thinking to do Lilia a kindness. "He may find some one whom he *may* think fit to match with the blood of the Elphinstones."

That speech was still ringing in Lilia's ears, as with a heated brow, she set forth to her solitary walk. Then she remembered, never without the deepest sorrow, the most unmitigated regret, the brother whose forbearance has lessened her pilgrimage, for now she so looked on it, through life. She recollected, with a sentiment akin to remorse, that whilst he had doubted himself, he had forborne to harass her. She threw herself on a bank by the wayside, and bowing down her head on her very knees, wept violently. Here afflictions were more than she could bear. She prayed to die. On the past she could not look, without feeling that she had been the cause of her brother's death. To the future she could not turn, without a forboding of many dreary years with a sister whose unsubdued and hard character had never been compa-

nionable to her own. The intermediation of a brother often brings sisters into an union, broken when that bond is withdrawn.

How bright had once been her hopes, Lilia dared not to reflect. She prayed, however, that she might be enabled to withdraw her affections from an object who, she was taught to believe, was wholly unworthy of them. Could she but think so!

The voice of Mr. Hope, speaking soothingly to her, recalled her from this paroxysm of sorrow. Something in *his* presence always checked the violence of her anguish; something in his conversation, without precept or schooling, without the painful effect of a superior virtue, always composed and edified her. She arose, and in silence accepted his invitation to prolong her walk. They rambled round Hopewood: they traversed the rich verdure of the park, and entered the very wood wherein Lilia had walked with Bernard, and where Miss Hope had accompanied them. In all her walks with Alice, they had ever turned resolutely another way, partly from kindness, partly on principle. There was a sort of tacit concession to her feelings in going through the park at Hopewood, which Mr. Hope, doubtless, intended, for he knew how unwise it is to oppose, vehemently, the long-cherished predilections of the heart. He wished, too, rather to lead the conversation to the subject which he perceived was pressing heavily upon the spirits of Lilia, coupled as it was with grief for the memory of a beloved brother. New occupants now, of late, filled the house of Hopewood, and it had changed its character of gloom into one of occupation and cheerfulness. Children, the offspring of a wealthy and happy family, were at play on the lawn, servants were exercising the horses in the park, and gardeners were at work in the pleasure-grounds.

Mr. Hope and Lilia took, therefore, the road away from the house, and struck into one of the numerous paths which intersected the wood. How feathery were the larch boughs, as they swept the green sward beneath them! how rich the young leaves of the budding oak! how gay and fair was everything in that bright and glorious May morning!

Lilia gazed up to the blue skies, and the wish arose to her lips—"Oh! how I would that he were here! My brother! Oh! that we could again share these scenes together!" She recollected the troubles and sorrows from which *he* was free, and she recalled that wish.

Mr. Hope permitted her to walk by his side in silence. At length, as they came out upon a green hillock, from whence a fair view of the country, in all its vernal livery, might be seen,

he recommended Lilia to set herself on the stem of a fallen tree, to rest herself previous to recommencing her walk home. She sank down, relieved by the suggestion. Mr. Hope stood beside her. After a few desultory remarks, he addressed her on the subject of her thoughts. He referred to Mr. Elphinstone.

"My dear Lilia," he said gently, "do not condemn yourself too severely, if, even after all that has occurred, even after the baseness and levity with which your heart has been wrung, and the hasty and unjustifiable grounds on which Mr. Elphinstone's resolution was formed, you cannot think of him now, as you will one day do. I hope never with bitterness."

Lilia replied quickly. "With bitterness ? Oh ! never, never ! though my sorrow be called weakness—though it be wrong—wrong to him who is gone, to those who remain—I cannot help it. Tell me," she added earnestly, "if you think it a sin !—if the love, of which the object is unworthy, is wrong in the sight of God ?"

"No," replied Mr. Hope. "By the judgment of man it will be deemed a weakness ; but, rely upon it, God is more merciful to such weaknesses, than to the bitter, unrelenting heart."

"You comfort me much," said Lilia; "for too much has been expected from me. I hope, in time, to think as I ought to do of Mr. Elphinstone." The name died away on her lips. "I hope, in time, that this too deep regret, this cankering sorrow, will be overcome. I cannot place that construction on his conduct which others do. I cannot believe that worldly motives have actuated him. That he has been misled, and that absence had lessened the bond between us," she added, sighing deeply, "I can believe ; and, believing, I can bear it : but that, as I am taught, but vainly taught, to think, he has sought an unworthy plea to extricate himself from an engagement formed under other circumstances, I cannot believe."

"I am rejoiced to find you so reasonable on a point on which most persons are either blindly impassioned or madly violent," said Mr. Hope ; "and I see that those who love you may trust to your own inherent dignity of character to assert its own cause."

"There will never," replied Lilia, mournfully, "be any occasion to do so. Our separation is, as far as this world is concerned, for *ever*."

"Yet," rejoined Mr. Hope, "if on the news of all that has happened, he should——," he paused, then added hurriedly, "if repentance should be testified ; for I believe his heart to be good,——"

"—I believe so too," cried the generous Lilia. "Yes, yes; I will ever believe that he has been basely deceived; not acting, as has been said, upon common report."

"—Then," pursued Mr. Hope, "should he ever desire to retrace his course, to acknowledge his penitence, would you receive him back? Would you give him again that noble heart, so pure, so trusting, and so wronged?"

As Lilia turned to answer the question, she was struck by the paleness of the countenance on which she gazed. She answered promptly,

"No: the man who has ever doubted me shall never proffer me again his affection; even if——even if," she added hesitatingly, "my heart breaks."

Mr. Hope was silent, but he was satisfied; for he saw, beneath that gentle, suffering demeanour, the firmness without which sensibility becomes weakness. He admired the dignity without pride, and loved the woman's heart, the more than woman's strength.

He then entered fully into those resources to which the unhappy may turn. To the conviction that a special Providence watches over the gentle emotion of the female mind, as over the all-important workings of the hero, or the legislator's troubled and burning heart, he solemnly drew her attention; then, in a tremulous voice, he asked her whether change of scene, absence, more especially from Hopewood, would not contribute to restore her?

To this Lilia objected. "How can I leave Honora? She and I are indissolubly tied together. Poor Honora! as Ruth said to Naomi, 'Where thou goest, I will go.' Besides," she added, almost shuddering, "here I am safe under your care. I have a presentiment that Fate has not yet fulfilled all her task; and that whilst Lord Ravenspur lives,—and Mr. Aylmer ——. Oh! Mr. Hope, how I dread—how I loathe those men!"

Mr. Hope shook his head: but he was silent.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE HOUR.

No one could have supposed, that within Haskreton Hall there dwelt one individual who owned a care, or suffered under a malady. For, each day, came a fresh visitant, or arose a new

scheme of pleasure. The dice-box was heard even early in the afternoon; notes of quadrille, and parties at basset, filled up the early part of the evening: then dancing consumed the hours till midnight, when a supper collected together the wits, and the belles, and the heavy artillery of society, and its lighter ingredients; and the song went round as long as the gentlemen could retain their seats, long after the ladies had retired to bed. During all this Lord Ravenspur's spirits seemed, to most observers, to revive; he could even jest at this night of horrors; and "The Apparition" was the common butt of all the dull wit that most country houses are cognisant of.

Miss Wingrove looked on. "I doubt whether all this is really doing him any good," she remarked one day to Sir Henry Aylmer.

"Good!—a great deal of good!" cried Lady Charlotte. "I never saw him in better spirits."

"I am certain he must be convinced," said Sir Henry Aylmer, "that there is no foundation in reason to believe such appearances credible."

"Very possibly," replied Miss Wingrove; but she felt sure that Lord Ravenspur had a secret uneasiness at his heart.

She read it in his forced, and, ofttimes, even outrageous spirits; she saw it in his furtive glances towards herself, to observe if she were watching him; she perceived it in the half-checked sigh, and she observed, what no one else perceived, that the emaciation, which seemed his only complaint, but which was, doubtless, the symptom of extreme exhaustion, increased almost daily. She felt miserable and apprehensive. Still, medicine seemed little likely to avail, and the only plan, Miss Wingrove thought, was to wait patiently till the fatal day appointed—according to the prediction, which he believed in—according to his own apprehensions—for his death.

She was not aware that all this time the nervous excitability was working like a subterraean fire, fearfully to break out and to close all.

But nothing could have been done; no change of place, no argument could have taken from Lord Ravenspur's heart that heavy weight, nor have convinced him that he had not received a warning from the world unseen. During this awful period,—worse than the ordinary agonies of a death-bed;—whilst he wandered about with the consciousness of his doom, he was perfectly collected, and it was eventually found that that period had not been wholly unemployed.

One day, he and Miss Wingrove were walking on the colonnade, which ran the whole length of the south front of the house. The warmth of that genial day appeared to invigorate

the shattered frame of Lord Ravenspur. He pointed out to his watchful friend and cousin some alterations which he projected ; he spoke, for once, to *her*, as if years were in store for him, and as if the tree, which he should plant on the morrow, would shade *him*,—even him,—with its boughs, at some distant period.

Miss Wingrove was gladdened by this style of discourse, which continued as long as they were alone. A gay, noisy party rushed out from luncheon, Lady Charlotte Courtenay at their head, and Lord Ravenspur's repartees were the delight of all as they lingered beneath the colonnade. They dashed off into the shades of the pleasure-grounds, and he became dejected, and expressed himself fatigued. "Others," he observed to his cousin, "may laugh, and make laughter ; upon me, alone is the mark set."

He fell into a reverie, from which no gentle arts of Miss Wingrove, whose attachment grew as his maladies increased, could arouse him.

The next morning he sent to her, before she had left her dressing-room.

"Well," he said, "Esther, will Sir Henry Aylmer be convinced by this ?" He paused, and added, in great agitation, "Last night, the vision appeared again. I had not been asleep. I heard a noise near me, about me, like the fluttering of a bird. I saw her—a figure in white passed around the bed, extended a hand, as if to draw my attention, and then left me ; it was the same — Isabel !"

He gazed at his cousin as he spoke, and his eyes were wild, and his face haggered ; his hands fell powerless ; his voice was hollow and weak. "Esther," he added, feebly, "I feel that I am dying."

"Then," she cried, alarmed, as well as awe-struck, "my dear cousin, consider, and make your peace with this world, as you hope for salvation in the next."

Lord Ravenspur waved his hands impatiently, and shook his head, as if to say, "I have no belief in *that* folly." But he said, "I certainly wish to repair some omissions ; I wish to provide for that wretched Harry Aylmer in my will. Don't say a word of all this to the party in the house; don't expose me to ridicule."

"My dear lord ! at such a time———"

"I grant it all ; hear me. Will *you* see that due care is taken of that poor idiot ? That he is placed with *good* people—even with religious people, if you think fit ; perhaps it may be as well."

"I know the very persons," said Miss Wingrove, eagerly, "who could take charge of him—an aged clergyman and his wife, all simplicity and kindness."

"I am content. See that it is done, and done secretly ; for it is as well that all that Harry and I have seen together should not be the talk of a country neighbourhood. Then there is another point———"

Lord Ravenspur paused, and drank off a cordial which was near him. "You know those two sisters ? you know the circumstances under which their brother died ? I mean the Miss Howards !"

"I remember."

"The youngest was, as you know, betrothed to Elphinstone, now restored to his estate. I did not like the man, and in a frolic—but 'tis of no use troubling you with a long story—I am a poor, weak invalid, Esther, whom you call superstitious, but I *am* brave in some matters ;—I can own that I have been a calumniator, a cruel, a wicked calumniator, but to no one but you, remember."

"Then," said Miss Wingrove, "what good will that do ?"

"I wish," replied Lord Ravenspur, thoughtfully, "to reconcile those two together, if I knew but the means."

"The means," exclaimed Miss Wingrove solemnly, "are *truth*. Pardon me, I know much, and can guess more ; you wished to marry this unhappy girl, and, therefore, countenanced a falsehood. As you hope to meet your Saviour ——"

Lord Ravenspur stopped her imperatively. "I will have none of that superstition, Esther ; but I believe my mind may be easier, and, if I am to live, I may have more chance of permanent recovery if I wipe this sin from my remembrance."

"—Humbly trusting," interposed his monitor, "that He may cease to remember it who will hereafter judge it."

"Very well—vastly well !" cried Lord Ravenspur : "this is the time to admonish me, I own. Do you write for me, and I will sign whatever you wish. You govern me, Esther, for I am weak—weak as a child. I wish that you had always governed me !" he added, in a tone of sadness.

Miss Wingrove was touched, and the tears fell upon the paper upon which in tremulous haste, for she feared lest that shattered frame might be summoned away ere this act was done, she penned a letter, addressed by Lord Ravenspur to Mr. Elphinstone, and solemnly recanting every imputation against Lilia. It was signed with his own hand, and that signature was witnessed—Miss Wingrove willed it so—by his faithful valet.

Lord Ravenspur was much exhausted after this effort, but his spirits rallied. "I have still three days, Esther, before the *hour*, and I mean to be merry these three."

"I hope so—I mean to say, I hope not," said Miss Wingrove.

"I suppose you would be sending for that hypocrite, Pratt; see, when you uphold the Church, what the clergy are!" cried Lord Ravenspur. "That man would perjure himself, any day, for a living; I know it by experience."

"Then why did you put temptation in his way?"

"—The impossibility of getting any one better among the whole body of clergy, and the convenience of having a man who will do anything you wish," said Lord Ravenspur.

"Ah!" rejoined Miss Wingrove, "the fault may lie in the patronage, I do think."

"It is these things," said Lord Ravenspur, seeking a plea for his own unworthiness, and coupling the members of the Church (then in its darkest era of supineness and corruption) with religion, "that make me think so ill of religion."

Miss Wingrove shook her head, but dared not answer, lest she should strengthen by controversy what she regarded with sorrow, for her discretion was equal to her good intention—a rare combination!

A breakfast table in a country-house is, where all or most of the visitors assemble, as pleasant a repast as can be conceived. It was never formal at Haskreton, even in those days of formality: from ten to twelve there was a continual influx of the late and the early, the dull and the gay; for the former, the newspapers; for the latter flirtation, gossip, and all those agreeable recreations comprised under those generic terms.

"Bless me! how pale you look, Miss Wingrove!" cried Lady Charlotte, as she flew in with her little mob-cap on the top of her head. "And Mr. and Mrs. Pratt here, too! What a charming surprise!"

"We dined here last night," said Mrs. Pratt, drawing up.

"But it may have escaped her ladyship's attention," interposed Mr. Pratt.

"To be sure it might," whispered Lady Charlotte to Miss Wingrove. At this moment Lord Ravenspur entered.

He came in alone, and not leaning on the arm of his valet, as he sometimes did, but seemingly desirous to show that he was stronger than usual. Yet, on being asked after his health, he made no reply; and there was a gloom of manner which cast a shadow upon the gaiety of those around him. He withdrew hastily from the table, and disappeared for the day.

"This will never do!" cried Lady Charlotte, as soon as he was gone; "we must rally him out of this."

"Mr. Pratt," said Miss Wingrove, drawing him aside, "come here: I want you to talk to Lord Ravenspur, to comfort, to exhort him," she added, whilst the tears gathered in her eyes.

"It would be taking a great liberty, Miss Wingrove," said Mr. Pratt: "a most unseemly liberty."

"Well, then, who else," cried Miss Wingrove, irritated, "could undertake it?"

"I was his lordship's domestic chaplain," answered the pensive and modest Mr. Pratt, with some self-importance, "and my place has not been supplied."

Miss Wingrove turned from him impatiently; and that day was passed by her in a sorrow that was inconceivable: the more so, that no one sympathised with her, as she would have wished them to sympathise. She rejoined a group who were standing around the fire in mysterious confabulation.

"For my part," Sir Henry Aylmer was saying, "I wash my hands of it. I am surprised his lordship is not convinced. Besides, I am going away to a manor of his, twenty miles hence, upon some business he wishes me to do for him."

"Well, well, we can do without you," cried Lady Charlotte, impatiently. "Go. When do you come back?"

"Not for these ten days; and I shall find you all well and merry, and Ravenspur laughing at his own folly."

Miss Wingrove sighed. "I believe him to be dying," she said, sadly.

"What!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte, "and are you also so absurd? However, since a man may die of imagination, we have arranged—Sir Henry Aylmer, shut the door. Now, for your honour, proffered to me; you, Miss Wingrove; you"—she went on—"you—that you will keep our secret."

She then, whispering, administered to each a solemn vow of secrecy, upon what subject remains hereafter to be unfolded.

It was a bright and beautiful day when Sir Henry Aylmer sat out on his little journey. He took a calm leave of his cousin, who, ever before him, concealed his fears—for there is something imperative in a matter-of-fact character. They shook hands, and parted. Sir Henry reached his journey's end. What is here to be related rests on testimony solemnly given; if in falsehood, may the falsifier be forgiven for making the pure form of truth serve to the purposes of deceit!

It was a lone, half-occupied manor-house, to which he repaired in order to transact some sales of timber for Lord Ravenspur; in such matter, Sir Henry's judgment was greatly

prized. The house stood at some distance from the main road, in the centre of fields which had once been a park, but were now inclosed—for this old place was inhabited by a tenant who farmed it, and who lived in the back of the house. In the front, looking upon a pleasant garden, were apartments which were kept for Lord Ravenspur, when he chose to visit his property in that direction; these were appropriated for Sir Henry Aylmer.

How he dined, how he supped, how he read the last number of the "Gentleman's Magazine," and studied the Road-book—for he was to travel on the next day—it behoves not the chronicler of mightier events to declare: he went to his sleeping-room, however, in due, reasonable time, that is, about half-past eleven. He had been in bed about half an hour, trying to sleep, when suddenly the bed-curtains were opened, and Lord Ravenspur stood before him. Sir Henry Aylmer looked at him for some time, and thought that it was a strange freak in his relation thus to follow him to the old manor-house; but he began to reproach him for coming there without giving the good man of the house notice. "For," added the baronet, "what accommodation can you have?"

This address, so characteristic of him who made it, proves how distinct was that appearance in the dead of the night, and how clearly it bore the form of one who had then ceased to exist. Moreover, Sir Henry turned to the other side of the bed to ring the bell, when suddenly—as suddenly as he had entered—Lord Ravenspur disappeared.

Then Sir Henry Aylmer was startled; he remembered, and for the first time, that this was the night of the fatal prediction. The servant came in at the sound of the bell, and was asked, in a tone of extreme astonishment, not unmixed with agitation,—"Where was Lord Ravenspur?"

The reply was, that Sir Henry's servant had never seen his lordship since they left Haskreton. Then Sir Henry arose; he dressed himself, and, assisted by the inmates of the house, they searched every apartment, every part of the garden, but Lord Ravenspur was not to be found; nor was there any indication that any one had broken into the house.

Still Sir Henry was incredulous.

"Ravenspur has played me this trick," he said, "because I would not give credit to his prediction." Yet he resolved, so strong was his impression that he had seen Lord Ravenspur, to return to Haskreton on the following day, before proceeding further on his journey.

Meantime, the dinner hour at the Hall arrived. There Lord Ravenspur made his appearance; and now a bright, though

delicate flush, had settled on his face; his eyes sparkled once more; and, by tacit consent, all jokes on the painful subject, upon which all had had some witticism to give out, was avoided. Miss Wingrove tried to be cheerful, for she saw that her cousin's eyes often sought hers, as if looking for sympathy and support, or trying to test *her* thoughts; or, perhaps—and she felt overpowered as she thought it—in sad and secret farewell.

The conversation, however, flowed on easily; it was even brilliant. Few who then sat at Lord Ravenspur's table could forget that day. The wit for which he was famed, dulled of late by an insurmountable depression, the knowledge which he possessed, the elegance of his taste, seemed in their perfection just when they were about to disappear for ever from the face of society.

He was congratulated by every body on his good looks; he was over-congratulated. One thought him fatter within these few days; another had never seen him look so well; a third wished he himself had half as good a chance of long life as Lord Ravenspur. "At all events," exclaimed his lordship, smiling, "I have cheated the ghost, for here is *the* day, yet see how well I am!"

The ladies were just quitting the room. Miss Wingrove lingered. She caught one look of the fevered cheek, the bright eye, the emaciated face, which all had so much praised, and then turned away.

The sounds of music in the hall soon drew every one thither that evening. Lady Charlotte had set every one to dance. Dancing was then no measured and languid movement, if we except the minuet, but a *bona fide* exertion—a sacrifice to Terpsichore of one's composure, and one's slippers. The hall rang with the "College Hornpipe," as couple after couple allemanded it round and round. Lord Ravenspur passed through, and looked on for a moment; then he went up to the drawing-room, and thither Lady Charlotte and her gay company followed, as everything was done for one especial purpose.

Soon came supper; and then, more faintly than before, was heard the voice of the noble host; and his smile was less frequent, and his witticism less bold. And after the company had sat about half an hour he apologised, but begged leave to retire, "Though it is now," he said, "scarcely eleven o'clock." He bade a kind "Good night" to all, and, ringing for his valet to meet him on the stairs, withdrew. And then Lady Charlotte addressed the company, and proclaimed the secret of the morning—the plot of the evening. Every clock in the house had been altered, and even his lordship's watch, which

had been put back half an hour, that the fatal moment might pass unknown.

Much merriment ensued; the joke and the song went round, and though some voices trembled, still louder and louder grew the merriment. The half hour passed on; time seemed to have wings of lead, and still drank the gentlemen, and still laughed the ladies, who composed that company. In an instant there was silence; they were checked, as the gay assembly of old by the handwriting on the wall. The door opened; the valet appeared; his face was pale, his voice was solemn, as it uttered these words—"My lord is dead!"

Some of the company rushed up to Lord Ravenspur's bedchamber, others remained to raise Miss Wingrove, who had fainted; some went into hysterics; and the hall, which had so lately rang with the sounds of music, re-echoed to the screams of frenzy. The calmer repaired to that bedside where so solemn a doom had been completed.

There is something peculiarly awful in seeing a corpse, recently instinct with life, alone:—the being who lately spoke to us, dying in the solitude, without any eye cognisant of those last agonies to which flesh is heir.

The body of Lord Ravenspur lay calmly on that pillow, on which he is supposed to have suffered agonies of concealed remorse and fear—*alone* had he died. The emaciation of the face, its deeply mournful expression, might now be too distinctly seen. People afterwards wondered how they could have been so deceived, so blind.

The mouth was drawn down as if with an unspeakable pang of fear—not of bodily pain, but of fear—*awe*; or if there be a more forcible way of expressing it, let it be applied. The eyes were half open, for no hand had closed them;—the pupils were turned up, as if, at that last moment, in unavailing prayer. The features, the hands, were attenuated, even to the point when the bone breaks through the stretched and delicate skin.

He lay in a gorgeous bed, every luxury around him; his watch was on a table near him; it was then scarcely twelve; and as, in deep silence, the company looked on the body of the deceased nobleman, the great clock, which had also been put back, struck loudly the midnight hour.

Then the valet told his tale. "His lordship had made his usual preparations to go to rest, looking now and then at his watch. After getting into bed he ordered the curtains to be closed at the foot. He then again looked at his watch; it was, by that, a quarter of an hour, or rather more, past eleven. Lord Ravenspur then asked to look at his valet's watch, and he

seemed pleased to find that they both agreed. He put them to his ear to satisfy himself that they went ; and then he smiled, and said, "This mysterious lady is not a true prophetess, I think." When it was near the real hour of twelve, he turned to his valet and said, "I will wait no longer ; reach me my medicine, I will try to sleep."

The man complied with that direction, and stepped into the dressing-room to mix the potion. Whilst he was there he heard his lordship breathing very hard. He ran to him, and found him in the agonies of death.

* * * *

On the afternoon of the ensuing day Sir Henry Aylmer returned. On hearing that his noble kinsman was dead, he inquired at what hour ? and on the reply being given that the event took place at midnight, the man of reason staggered into the first room into which he could turn, and called for camphor julep ; but after a time he recovered himself, and said to those around him, "that it might be accounted for by natural causes." Many were of his opinion, yet the witnesses of this strange event drew up a memorial of it, which was solemnly attested ; and it is quite true that Sir Henry Aylmer never went to sleep at that lone manor-house again ; and that, upon sundry reports being circulated, touching the nights that he had passed there, he even so far lost his dignity as to come into print, and to publish a statement of his late lordship's unwished-for appearance at an unlooked-for hour, just when his disembodied spirit had left its worn and earthly tenement. The convictions of all who were interested in the fate of the deceased nobleman, accorded with those of Sir Henry Aylmer.

What may be thought of this singular narrative, now that time has obliterated its first impressions, it is easy to anticipate. However, in the dark days of the last century, the fate of Lord Ravenspur was coupled in many minds with the agency of that unseen world, of which, according to Dr. Johnson, we have "evidence enough—good evidence—which needs no support."

Meantime, Miss Wingrove, recovering from her shock and her sorrow, fulfilled to the letter, in pious haste, the injunctions laid upon her by her departed cousin and friend. She placed Mr. Aylmer in the family of a clergyman, to whose care he remained until he died, for his increasing imbecility and family interest disarmed the terrors of the law. She watched over him, occasionally, to the last. She next fulfilled her promise regarding the letter to Bernard Elphinstone, and undertook herself a journey to Scotland, that she might

deliver Lord Ravenspur's letter in person. She did so; and then resigning herself to sorrow, which many might deem immoderate, sank finally into a dejection, unsolaced by those hopes which gild the early grave with bright hopes, and point to a future re-union. She sorrowed, as one that had no hope.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Then doth the joyfull feast of John the Baptiste take his turne,
When bonefires great, with lofty flame, in every towne doe burne."
Barnabe Googe.

The death of Lord Ravenspur made a sad vacuum in ——shire: it left people nothing to talk about; for his in-comings and out-goings, his sins and his pleasantries, had long been food for the country.

Sundry old ladies could recollect hearing that some one had seen his lordship's ghost on the previous midsummer's eve, the same person having passed the night fasting, on the last midsummer's eve, in the church porch, when at midnight the spirits of all who were to die in that parish came by; and, on that occasion, his lordship had been dressed in a laced coat, point ruffles, and even to his very shoe-ties, had been carefully related; and he, followed by a host of the doomed, had knocked at the church door, as, by ancient custom and superstition, he was appointed to do, even in the order in which their doom was to be.

All this came out, as, after the event, it might naturally do; and a fortnight after his lordship's death, the "thrice-hallowed eve," as Collins calls it, came round again. The custom of celebrating this festival has long since died away in no longer Merry England, or, to speak the plain truth, since steam and manufactories have absorbed so large a part of it, in Dirty England. No longer does the fennel, or the lily, or the birch, or the starry St. John's wort, adorn the peasant's door as it did of old, keeping up even in unlettered minds, some taste for the pure, and the figurative, and the beautiful; and yet, in the village of Hopewood, that same midsummer's eve was pleasant—it was so long—the sun seemed reluctant to quit the serene heavens, the flowers were still fragrant, the evening shadows might be deep in the hollow beneath the rectory, but a gleam of rich light revealed the wandering stream, and

its sounds were heard, such was the stillness, below the mill-dam.

It seemed a sort of holiday: children, usually hurried to rest, lingered in the meadows, for almost the longest day was come; and the old women stood at the doors, having had hours of rest since their work was done; and the mowers were still at their scythes, for the evening had not closed in, for fear of a storm on the morrow.

The church clock struck eight as Mr. Hope and Lilia lingered in the rectory garden; and as they walked, they talked. His pensive mind recurred to the days of old, and he was telling his gentle companion how, in those days of which we have discarded so much that is good, reviving only the formalism and the intolerance, friends long parted by discord, met with friends on midsummer's eve; and hands were joined in amity that had borne the weapon of destruction; or, worse still, "stabbed with their mouths," as old Dr. South expresses it; or "murdered with their tongues." And he spoke of the superstition of the fern seed, by the receipt of which human beings might walk invisible, and which was only exhibited to mortal eyes at the very moment when the Baptist first saw the light. Then, as if in connection with the solemn thoughts that evening brings in her train, and whilst as yet "a star or two on her brow" sufficed the Goddess of Repose, the conversation turned, in solemnity and without condemnation, to the departed Lord Ravenspur.

Never was his name now mentioned before Miss Hope, who had felt his death severely.

Whilst they spoke, Mr. Hope descried, winding up the road which led to the village, the figure of a gentleman. He noticed it not to Lilia, until, looking at her, he saw her face pale and agitated: he took her arm within his, and, leading her into the house, placed her in a chair by one in which Alice was reclining, in her own private sitting room.

Mr. Hope then left them. Alice, lost in her own reflections, merely said, "Are you tired of walking" and continued to look upon the view which, from this angle of the house, was visible, and which was now still distinct.

The quick breathing of her companion did not attract the notice of Miss Hope, and yet they were long together—long; for the stranger who had arrived was, as Lilia guessed, in an earnest conference with Mr. Hope.

It *was* earnest; for the young man whose figure Lilia had seen, and known too well, pleaded long for mercy, for charity for aid,—to one who seldom heard the voice of supplication in vain.

He painted his own sufferings—he acknowledged, whilst he blushed for his doubts. He spoke of the unhappiness which had converted prosperity into a tax—a tax upon a burdened heart: he besought a hearing, if not from him whom he once called friend, from her whom he had never ceased to love.

He spoke with the eloquence of passion; but he spoke to one who was truly unconvinced, even though the pleader had once had his warmest esteem and admiration. For Mr. Hope, careless of injuries to himself, was almost inveterate for Lilia. What were the arguments which availed at last I cannot say. Perhaps some distrust of his own motives—some pity, doubtless, for the anguish of him who spoke—some hope of seeing that fair face, whose increasing sadness friendship might pity, but which it might not hope to dispel—won at last the victory. The struggle had been great; and Mr. Hope's voice was hoarse, and his hand was cold and tremulous; and, as he gave it at last, in sign of amity, to the unhappy Bernard Elphinstone,—

"You have still her affections," he said, with deep emotion. "Oh, prize and reward them!"

"I will—I will!"

"And yet I know not," said the clergyman, with his hand upon the handle of the door; "*how* will she receive you?"

They crossed the little passage; the little parlour, in which Alice sat, was lighted, the window was opened—Alice alone was there; but a glimpse of a black dress, ruffled by the evening breeze, on the winding walk leading to a quiet shrubbery, was visible, thanks to the still lingering light of St. John's eve.

Mr. Hope pointed it out to Bernard. "Go," he said—he sighed as he uttered the word—"tell your own tale: I will not incur the responsibility."

"Nor I," said Miss Hope, rising, and looking sternly at her former friend.

And yet he told his tale, and it was heard, for lovers are better listeners than friends.

Long was the conference; and the moon rose, and shed her gleams upon those who shared it, and the midnight had well-nigh struck before Bernard had torn himself away; and yet, on the morrow, came he again, and on the next day, and on the next day, too; and then—Yet, why proceed? merely for the satisfaction of those who, like Sir Henry Aylmer, want "evidence."

One day Bernard again stood in Mr. Hope's presence—again implored an interview—again sought an explanation. "*She* has forgiven me," he said, in a low and trembling voice, "and will not you forgive, trust, receive me?" The clergyman

raised his eyes to those of Elphinstone. They were moistened, as in much emotion; he gave him his hand. "Where," such was the question,—"is Lilia?" Bernard sought her, and led her to their kind and generous friend.

Mr. Hope took a hand of each—he placed them in each other. He looked upwards, and softly, yet solemnly, pronounced a blessing upon those whom man had thus conspired to sever, but whom God had, in His omnipotence and mercy, joined together.

FINIS.

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